

Reflections on Spirituality & Hopefulness



Daneo
Human & Spiritual
Development Services

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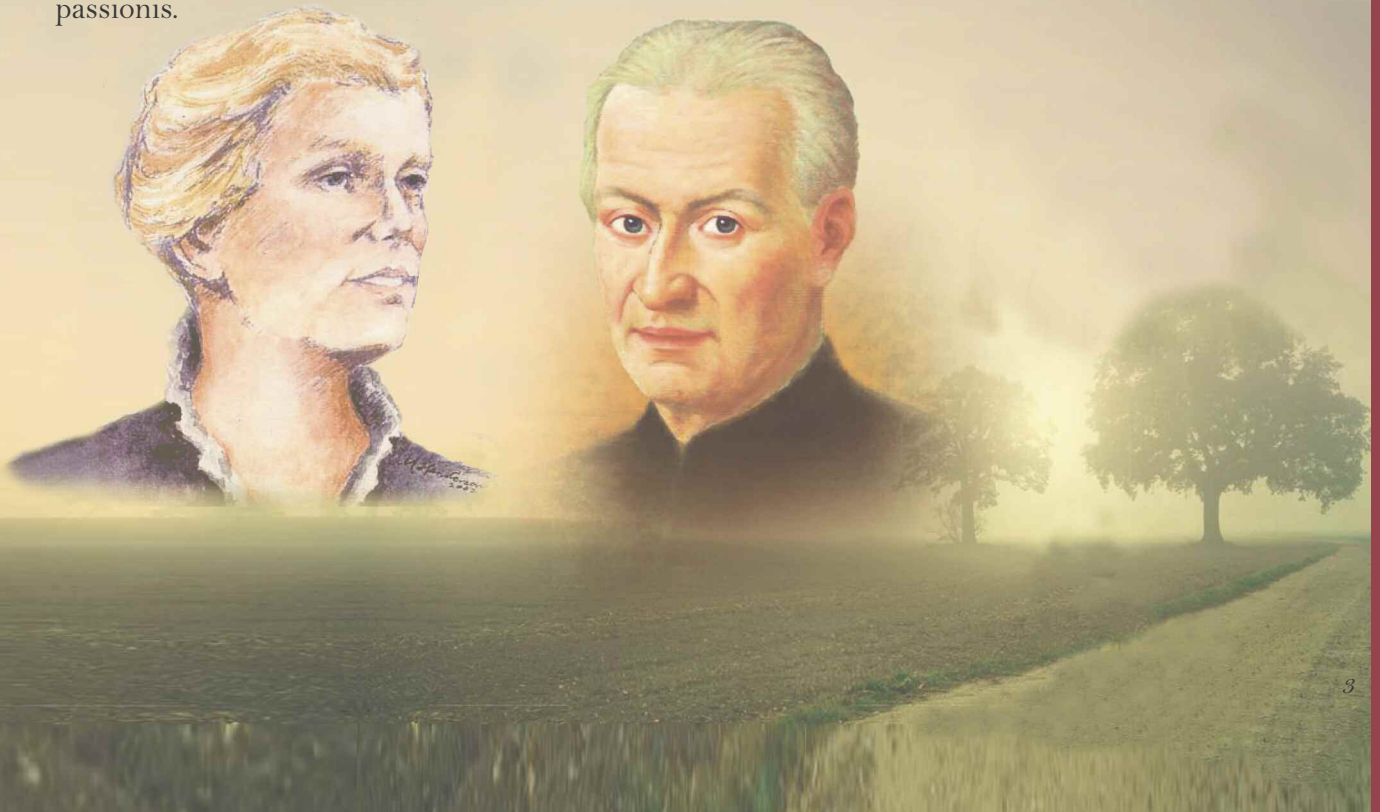
Introduction

This past year Passionists and their friends and associates throughout the world have been celebrating the tricentenary of their founding. Each foundation was invited to mark the occasion in some way. We at Daneo Services choose to publish a collection of short articles that capture something of the essence of our work and its connection to the intrinsic theme of Hope contained in the charism of the memoria passionis (memory of the Passion). Sadly we celebrate against the backdrop of increasing global conflict and war. As we watch the images emerging from Ukraine, we are challenged to remain not just hopeful but active hope-enablers in whatever networks we operate within. It is likely that as refugees continue to arrive in Ireland services such as ours will need to be ready to assist in the rebuilding of traumatised lives.

As we face the many challenges before us, we can take courage from the wisdom of Julian of Norwich as she declared in equally tragic times that “all manner of things shall be well” . It is about the ability to find peace, and even inner joy, in the face of adversity — to come to trust that there is something that transcends chaos and impermanence. It is about living daily the charism of the memoria passionis.

Daneo Services began as a Religious Life project drawing from the charisms of both the Congregation of the Passion and the Sisters of Mercy. Both Catherine McAuley and Paul Daneo were committed to reaching out to the crucified of their times. Today through the work of Daneo Services that outreach continues and is summed up in our statement to clients “you deserve to get the help you need”.

John Friel CP. Kathleen Savage RSM



The History of Daneo & New Life Counselling Services

Margaret Maguire BA

In August 1992 John Friel C.P. was commissioned by the Passionist Institute to assess the needs of young people in the Ardoyne area and develop, if necessary, a project that would respond to some of these needs. He approached the task with both fear and excitement; fear at the prospect of working in one of the most dangerous interfaces in North Belfast and excitement in facing the task of developing an appropriate response that would assist a long-suffering people, many of whom were traumatised by 30 years of violent conflict. It soon became clear that the appropriate response would take the form of a counselling service.

Within six months volunteers were identified and a shared premises was acquired, namely 111, Etna Drive, Ardoyne. The collaboration began with the Mercy Sisters, Ardoyne Association, The Flax Trust, and other voluntary and statutory organisations such as the Belfast Action Teams.

The initial name of the project was The Passionist Youth and Parent Resource Service. The project quickly grew, and the people sought their help from the beginning.

Ardoyne had suffered a great deal from the violence over the years with local people killed and many more wounded. The trauma experienced by many families due to the loss of a parent or child had taken its toll among so many. In addition to this, family had been further stressed because of the large number of fathers in prison.

For over 100 years the Passionists had been engaged in Pastoral care within the Ardoyne area. Their work had taken on many forms including support for employment creation projects and various human development enterprises. The Passionists along with representatives of the Ardoyne district engaged in a social analysis of the area.

The following issues were highlighted:

- 50% unemployment among employable adults.
- 80% unemployment among under 25-year-olds.
- Consequent lack of motivation to seek new opportunities or to set personal targets.
- Lack of ambition resulting from increasing apathy.
- Nonrealisation of young people's potential, academically and vocationally.
- Isolation of local community and strong sense of vulnerability.
- Increased breakdown of parental control.
- High level of poverty/high dependence on state benefits.
- Lack of adequate recreational space.
- Concerns around law and order.

In summary there was an awareness of the need for increased support structures, particularly for families and the young people of the district.

The project was formally launched from its base at 111, Etna Drive in November 1993. Through collaboration with the relevant statutory bodies the project strove to develop creative ways of working with and for young people and families in the Ardoyne, Oldpark and Cliftonville areas.

The project was initially managed by John for the first two years of its development.

Sr Kathleen Savage took over leadership from 1993 to 2002. During this time the volunteers were dedicated in creating a safe and confidential space for the local community.

After acquiring funding in 1996 the service moved to the top floor of 25A Ardoyne Road. With growing demand for the service this space was not big enough and it was decided to move the youth and child services to a temporary location at 31, Brompton Park, Ardoyne.

Fundraising efforts, government grants and the generous support of both the Passionist and Sisters of Mercy congregations made it possible to purchase the premises at 25, Ardoyne Road. In 2000 the project was renamed as New Life Counselling Service and was formally handed over to the community in June 2002.

From its humble beginnings in Etna Drive the service expanded to providing counselling services to over 180 schools across Northern Ireland. In addition, it works with the probation board of N.I. delivering art therapy to offenders and establishing a deaf counselling project. New Life Counselling continues to offer services not only within the Belfast area but across Northern Ireland.

In October 2003 Daneo Services began as an urban religious life project incorporating the mission of both the Passionist and Mercy congregations whose aims are to offer solidarity and support to all those who are suffering.

Because they are interested in a person's spiritual dimension as well as the emotional and physical, Daneo Services are an alternative to a strictly psychological understanding of human needs and relationships.

What sets Daneo apart from other mental health services is their premise that spirituality is a fundamental part of being human and an intrinsic human characteristic. Those seeking services from Daneo are free to incorporate their spirituality within their therapeutic work if they so wish.

Work carried out by Daneo therapists is conducted across all faiths and with those who have no faith or stated faith preference.

Over the years as well as working with individuals Daneo Services has provided outreach to various organisations such as Cancer Lifeline, Survivors of Trauma, local schools and many other groups in Belfast and beyond. Extensive work in supporting faith communities takes the form of counselling, pastoral supervision, facilitation of meetings and other training events.

Over the years many people have found the help they needed. What follows is a small sample of comments made by clients as they concluded their time at Daneo Services.

"I came to counselling a very broken woman after the breakup of my marriage. I never thought I would get my life back together again. Thanks to the support from Daneo Services I came through very difficult times and now I feel the strength to get on with my life."

"I suffered from depression for years and had been everywhere looking for help through the medical model. Thanks to counselling and the support of Daneo Services I was able to get to the bottom of the cause which was to do with my violent home upbringing where alcohol was more important than food on the table. Now I leave counselling for the first time feeling I have found hope."

"I was too ashamed to tell anyone about being sexually abused as a child, but it was only when I went to counselling, I realised that I had lived in fear of consequences all my life and was never free. The impact of the early

abuse on my life and my marriage were extreme. Thankfully been accepted and not blamed or judged in counselling helped me to come to terms with what had happened in my past and I was able to find healing and resolution and thanks to counselling at Daneo Services I feel a new person and free for the first time in my life.”

As we look back at our history we acknowledge that we have lived and worked through traumatic events and the aftermath and impact of thirty years of conflict offering emotional and psychological support to those who presented for those services.

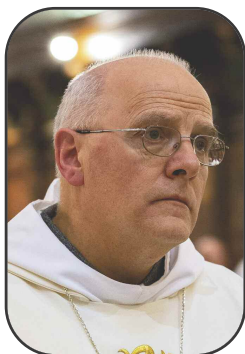
Living in post-conflict times we continue to see that the need for counselling services is as great as ever even though the issues may be somewhat different.

Our clients face many social, economic, health concerns, as well as drugs, alcohol and marital problems. Other emerging needs around financial hardship with rising daily costs and increased costs to provide education and better living conditions add to the stress of everyday living.

Daneo Services remains at the heart of the community doing what both Founders of the respective Congregations involved did back in their times: "Respond to the suffering people and the needs of our times." We are grateful for the on-going support of the Passionist and Mercy Congregations which testifies to their vision and commitment to the crucified of today.

Margaret Maguire BA

Mother of three Margaret has been with Daneo since it's begining in 2003 she is the Practice Manager at Daneo Services.



DOM MARK EPHREM OSB

Holy Cross Abbey

Daneo has been a blessing in the lives of numerous men and women these past decades.

The safe, warm, hospitable space of welcome afforded by Daneo Services has helped many grow in the way of healing and make progress on the path to wholeness.

I attribute Daneo's success largely to the compassionate regard, understanding heart and listening ear offered by each one of its consultants. These strive to hold in respectful consideration the whole person in all those who seek out their help. With competent and truly professional skill each client is led to better appreciate the unique and wonderful gift of his or her life. As a result, they experience renewal in confidence and refreshment in hope.

I trust that Daneo will continue to make its invaluable contribution and continue to bless all who avail of its wide range of services.

Daneo Human & Spiritual Development Services

A Project of Love

John F. Friel CP C.Psychol., AFBPsS

Paul Daneo was an eighteenth century man whose intense interest and actions around human suffering, and its profound meaningfulness, has applications for us today. He was the second of sixteen children, six of whom survived infancy; and learned, at an early age, the reality of death and the uncertainty of life. His theological reflections brought a powerful and positive image of how God is drawn to us in our brokenness and how we can unite our suffering to His in such a way that brings light and life out of darkness and death. Thus, the memory of the cross becomes transformed into a hopefulness that transcends current pain and suffering. As we reflect on these themes, we come to see the cross as God's solidarity with men and women, young and old, in the condition of human suffering



In his book: *Passion of Christ – Passion of the world*, Leonardo Boff shares with us that Christ was rejected by a world oriented toward the preservation of power, and although he succumbed to these forces, he never abandoned his **project of love**. He believes the cross is the symbol of human power – and the symbol of Jesus' love and fidelity. Love is stronger than death, and power collapses before it. The loyalty of the cross then, the love on the cross, has triumphed. The name for this, Boff points out, is resurrection: a life stronger than the life of power, biological life, the life of the ego.

And so, the cross enters the history of love. Paul Daneo referred to the cross as an unfathomable sea of Divine Love. In this the traveller can find hope, a hope that draws us out of cruel despair. Hope in the face of self-rejection transfigures the meaning of the sufferer's torments. Ruben Alves the Brazilian theologian and philosopher speaking about Hopefulness writes:

Hope is the sensation that the last word does not belong to the brutality of facts with their oppression and repression. It is the suspicion that reality is far more complex than realism would have us believe, that the frontiers of the possible are not determined by the limits of the present, and that, miraculously and surprisingly, life is readying the creative event that will open the way to freedom and resurrection.

Rubem Alves

Daneo Services is a hope-based initiative that seeks to embrace the radical implications of the memoria passionis particularly as it translates itself in the lives of those plagued by despair. It seeks to be a **project of love** that

strives to draw hope and resurrection from within the face of human suffering. It works to integrate the strengths of psychotherapy and healthy religion and spirituality.

Working in the field of faith and psychotherapy Daneo Services acknowledge the tension that has long existed between psychology and religion. Many psychologists and psychiatrists are wary of religious systems and treat them with considerable suspicion, they describe them as overly magical, superstitious, and unscientific. Religion on the other hand has been mistrustful of psychology and psychiatry, which they see as overly humanistic, promoting rampant individualism, and lacking in any deep spiritual dimension.

Despite these tensions between psychotherapy and religion both theological and psychological researchers share similar questions regarding the human experience. Some of these questions reflect on the mystery of suffering, such as: Why do some people hate and torment themselves mercilessly? Why does violence and aggression exist? What is the reason for so much human suffering? What can we do about it? How can we develop greater compassion for ourselves and for others? These questions pose an urgent challenge to us all and invite us to engage in reflection, collaborative dialogue, and actions. We admire both secular and religious driven projects throughout the world who work tirelessly to elevate the plight of refugees, the homeless and victims of religious intolerance.

Bringing together the strengths of sound psychological insights into human nature coupled with a healthy religious discernment these can facilitate greatly the process of change, liberation, and the realisation of the key goal for both disciplines- the installation of dignity and hope.

Hope is at the core of pastoral psychotherapy. Hope allows us to risk greater vulnerability. It enables us to continue struggling when

growth is blocked or is very slow. perhaps the unique contribution of pastoral psychotherapy is as a “Hope Awakener” Paul in his letter to the Corinthians links hope with faith and love as crucial factors in constructive relationships.

Of course, where there is hope there also exists hopelessness, studies of prisoners of war show that many of the deaths were the result of hopelessness. Bruno Bettelheim, in reviewing his experience in a Nazi concentration camp, observed that prisoners who became hopeless (because they believed the repeated statements of the guards that they would never leave the camp except as corpses) became like walking corpses. These prisoners stopped even getting food for themselves and soon died. This story finds echoes in the lives of too many in our world today. People who have lost loved ones because of merciless torture and slaughter and who themselves have given up on life and wait for death. It is precisely into this place that *memoria passionis* seeks to become a “Hope Awakener” its energy is often released through the positive interventions and compassion of others who reach out in order to help us seek life and not death. When individuals experience this reawakening of hope they often speak of it as strengthening their resolve and accompanying them in their darkest hour, guiding them through seemingly desperate circumstances. Charles Snyder a psychologist and renowned hope researcher wrote:

*A rainbow is a prism that sends shards of
multicoloured light
in various directions*

*It lifts our spirits and makes us think of
what is possible.*

*Hope is the same – a personal rainbow of
the mind.*

Charles Snyder

We let the Scriptures have the final and more eloquent commentary on the task of Daneo Services in Belfast, and the people and themes that form our work and beliefs.

*We are afflicted in every way possible,
but we are not crushed; full of
doubts, we never despair.
We are persecuted but never abandoned.
we are struck down but never destroyed
...dead yet here we are, alive;
punished, but not put to death; sorrowful,
though we are always
rejoicing; poor, yet we enrich many.
We seem to have nothing,
yet everything is ours!*

(2 Cor. 4:8-9, 6:9-10).



John Friel CP C.Psychol. AFBPsS

Chartered Psychologist & Associate Fellow British Psychological Society. Chartered member Psychological Society of Ireland. Registered Practitioner Psychologist Health Care Professions Council (HCPC) Coordinator Daneo Services



For the past twenty-two years Cancer Lifeline has been directly involved with Daneo Services. This has been a combination of delivering one to one talking therapy/counselling support to clients impacted by a cancer diagnosis and their family members coupled with detailed development support to enhance our overall counselling service. More specifically this support has enabled us to develop a robust, fit for purpose and effective service with appropriate policies and procedures in place to steer and guide our practice.

The relationship with Daneo has been a very organic and evolving one, responding to our clients needs and that of the organisation. This has happened through quick response support when needed and more detailed support via regular review meetings to reflect on practice and put in place appropriate measures, safeguards, and structures to ensure the service is fully accountable and responsive to need.

Daneo are instrumental in supporting Cancer Lifeline to bring on sessional staff and guide us through interviewing potential new counsellors.

Covid has impacted significantly on our organisation in terms of additional pressures on the counselling service. Daneo and Cancer Lifeline are currently exploring with the sessional counsellors (through workshops) the impact this is having on the therapeutic relationship with clients impacted by cancer and their family members/carers.

Cancer Lifeline management committee and Development staff genuinely value and respect the quality of the guidance from Daneo and in particular John Friel who has journeyed with us in our efforts to meaningfully and responsibly support people affected by cancer and their families in North Belfast.

Bryan Irwin (Cancer Lifeline)



Are we there yet? Spiritual and Psychological Reflections on Hope

Dr. Volodimir Bezulowsky

Life is a journey. And like any journey, getting to your destination is a process that takes time. We know that; however, we often find it difficult to accept patiently that we are not there yet, and even more so when there are significant challenges along the way. That is why hope – and not just optimism – is so relevant to our life here as pilgrims and sojourners on earth. It is precisely because of our fundamental human condition of being “on the way”, that hope is an intrinsic aspect of our life – our whole life – and not just in difficult times, because hope is what gives a sense of direction and meaning to all we are and do.

In daily life, we use the term hope in so many ways, for ordinary little things, or for major life decisions; hope for good weather on holiday, or for recovery in the face of a serious illness. But what is “hope”? Philosophers or psychologists over the years have not always agreed on its definition, reducing hope to an issue of probability or some kind of passive attitude. A more common definition is that hope is “the expectation that something desired will occur”. Hope offers a motivational force and, in this way, it consists in an active orientation towards a goal, based on a belief that one can reasonably expect to reach that goal.

As we see from the above definition, whilst hope involves our emotions, it is much more than a feeling. It also involves both conative (to do with the mental faculty of purpose,

desire, or will to perform an action, ie volition) and cognitive (to do with our understanding and beliefs) elements. Hope however may too often merely be equated with a having a good feeling. In fact, this is confusing hope with optimism, ie the tendency to feel that good things are more likely to happen than bad ones. Now, there is nothing wrong with optimism per se, and optimists may find it easier to have hope. But optimism is neither necessary nor sufficient to hope – the prophet Jeremiah, for example, was not an optimist (clearly expecting that Israel’s situation would get worse and lead to exile), but he had a firm hope that God would restore His people and bring them back.

Mere optimism or, worse, “false” hope (based on unrealistic, unfounded goals), are deceptive, in so far they only give us an either naïve or misleading estimation of what the journey actually entails. “Hope” then may be no more than wishful thinking or illusion. By contrast, genuine hope enables us to look beyond the present and see the possibility of a different future, envisioning the journey and its destination, but without ignoring our present reality. If I have hope, I will not only desire to get “there” (and if possible, do what I can to move towards that goal), but I will also trust that I am really able to get there from “here”. We thus recognise an all-too-often neglected, yet essential, component of hope – that of acceptance. Whilst perseverance is usually the main aspect associated with hope (especially when it

concerns hard times of various kinds), for hope to be truly hope, perseverance must also be balanced with an authentic acceptance of our present situation (by which we don't mean passivity, resignation or stoicism) – accepting that today, I am at this particular point of the journey.

This has huge implications both in a psychological and spiritual context.

Hope is essential to healing and the recovery process. A major problem, however, when faced with suffering, has to do with two very common issues which in fact directly undermine hope: avoidance, and the tendency to see any experience of emotional struggle as a personal failure.

First, avoidance is a “normal” coping mechanism (we're not supposed to “like” pain), and may in fact be appropriate. But, as is well recognised in psychology, although avoidance brings a temporary relief from the experience of fear, avoidance actually maintains the fear itself (ie the beliefs about the feared object). Moreover, avoidance tactics in their various forms (be it thought-blocking or use of alcohol) are often in themselves maladaptive or cause further adverse effects.

Second, psychological suffering is often experienced as a personal failure, resulting in much self-blame or shame (on top of one's depression, for example).

“I shouldn't feel like this!”
- meaning: “it proves I am a weak person, I'm not good enough, I am not acceptable...”

All these aspects need to be addressed in the therapy context, not only as part of the treatment process itself, but also in order to foster hope. Of course, one usually desires a better future and helping the patient develop

a clearer vision of that possibility is important, and yet not sufficient. If there doesn't seem to be any possibility also of a path connecting that future to this present, because of the severity of one's condition or one's perceived inherent personal defectiveness, the only course of action is to first “get rid of” the present pain. In this case, there is no hope for the here and now, and hope is seen as conditional on first reaching a different place. And so, as a therapist, from the very start, and with virtually everyone, I find myself faced with the task of helping my patient accept their condition and stop looking for “quick fixes”.

Furthermore, acceptance is required not only of the “sufferer” but also of the “healer” who, journeying alongside, has to be able likewise to tolerate being with another's pain and distress, and not promise or try to achieve “quick fixes”. This enables the “healer” to be someone who first and foremost cares, and not only seeks to cure, and is thus able to stay with another at times of chronic or life-threatening illness. We see therefore that, in the therapeutic encounter, it is not only the success of various clinical interventions which is a source of hope, but, most importantly, the quality of the therapeutic relationship itself.



Similarly dynamics operate in our spiritual lives. Whilst, in the words of the Nicene Creed, we “look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come”, we of course agree that we are not there yet, and that there may be difficulties, delays or obstacles along the way. Suffering is a normal part of life, we know that. However, we find it very difficult to accept that reality. In fact, we often have a one-dimensional, either/or, expectation in the face of suffering: either we have faith, and should feel hopeful, motivated and joyful, or, if we still feel in any way despondent, discouraged or angry, it indicates a lack of faith. We thus tend to see any difficult experience of sadness, discouragement, worry or emotional pain as a lack of faith or a personal, moral failure. In a word, we believe that a “good enough” Christian shouldn’t be “struggling”. We feel that such experience is not “acceptable” (to ourselves, others, and ultimately God). The only remedy then, is to try and ignore it, and soldier on. When that fails (as it often does, eventually), we are left with our shame or self-blame (or blaming God...). And we remain alone in our suffering.

The Scriptures, though not answering the “why?” of suffering, offer a very different vantage point in this regard. One may think of the book of Job, or the sufficient grace that Paul received in relation to the “thorn” he was not rid of (2 Cor 12:9), and of course the passion of the Suffering Servant Himself, who in turn calls us to carry our crosses after Him. With regards to the above, one passage of special relevance springs to mind: *“Hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”* (Romans 8:24-25)

As this passage shows, not seeing our destination fully, not yet having what we hope for, are part and parcel of having hope. Travelling with patient endurance, though not a merely passive attitude, requires therefore accepting that today, I am here, on this very stage of my journey. Consequently,

as long as we haven’t reached our destination, we will not be able to experience it in its fullness. Hope, then, must always embrace a tension between the already and the not yet. *“Now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been revealed.”* (1 John 3:2)

Thus, from a spiritual point of view, accepting the reality of the present brokenness of this world is not opposed to faith and is in fact a sign of an authentic hope, whilst trusting at the same time that there is a God who has indeed compassion on our human misery (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2448) and is able to bring us to a better future, a *“place of abundance”* (Ps 66:12).

Talking of “acceptance” of course doesn’t imply in any way that we are supposed to like suffering. So then, what difference does this all make? Does it mean that, to live in hope is just to grin and bear it? Quite the contrary.

If, in hope, we can accept the reality of suffering, then we not only find encouragement and strength in our longing for our desired future and in the presence of a trusted other (friend, therapist or God) who guides us toward our goal. But we know that it is also valid to give voice to our sadness, confusion or pain, that this “lamenting” can be heard with compassion, instead of condemnation or rejection - and so we no longer remain alone in our suffering. An authentic, realistic hope capable of sustaining us on our journey is thus made of two dimensions, of “longing” and “lamenting” (by contrast, in simple terms, it could be said that despair is made up of lamenting only, optimism of longing only, and stoicism of neither longing nor lamenting).

The Scriptures, as we know, contain so many expressions of such lamenting, of distress, hurts, tears and sorrow, both in the Old and the New Testament, not least in the Psalms. We may now see such passages in a different light, realising that it is precisely because the psalmist hopes in the Lord that he can pour out his heart to Him in prayer, at times with

brutal honesty, often then also expressing his yearning for God's love and salvation, such as in Psalm 13, a short psalm expressing beautifully those two dimensions of hope.

It is only such a hope, with both perseverance and acceptance, giving voice both to longing and lamenting, which can truly sustain us on our journey. But such a hope is only possible if rooted in mercy, compassion and love, in the assurance that our tears can be seen and our cries can be heard. Not only is it psychologically healthier, bringing more individual integration and wholeness. But it also reaches beyond barriers and isolation, and we discover that we are not alone in our suffering. Such is the hope which "does not disappoint us" (Rom 5:5)

Further Reading

- Kelly Kopic, *Embodied Hope: A Theological Meditation on Pain and Suffering*, IVP Academic (6 Jun. 2017)
- Josef Pieper, *On Hope*, Ignatius Press (1 May 1986)
- C. R. Snyder, *Psychology of Hope: You Can Get There from Here*, Free Press (11 May 2010)



Dr. Volodimir Bezulowsky

A practicing psychiatrist from Belgium where he qualified as a medical doctor, trained in psychiatry in London and lived there for twenty years. He worked on an adolescent in-patient unit and later moved to Belfast in 2009, He is an accredited EMDR therapist, and currently works in private practice at Mirabilis Health Institute in Monkstown. Volodimir is also a lifelong member of an ecumenical lay brotherhood of men called the Servants of the Word.

“Over the years Daneo Services has provided counselling and psycho-educational training. These services have been extremely helpful and much sought after by our members. We have found the Daneo staff open, friendly, and professional.

We look forward to a continuing collaboration with them in the years ahead.”

Marie Close. Co-Ordinator.

Survivors of Trauma



Finding Life at Cancer Lifeline

Margaret Webb

When I was approached to work at Cancer Lifeline, I initially felt apprehensive. I had no experience of working with an organisation entirely dedicated to working with cancer patients, their families, and those bereaved by cancer. However, few families have not experienced cancer directly or indirectly through their family and friends, including my own. As I approached the work, I recalled memories of the past when the word cancer was whispered in a sentence or replaced with the letter 'c'.

As I entered the Cancer Lifeline building for the first time, I was struck by the absence of the necessary clinical ambience that so many cancer patients experience during their many appointments in the course of their treatments. Instead, I found chandeliers, beautifully framed mirrors and matching furnishings that spoke of welcome, warmth and even pampering. Beyond that, I was introduced to a team of people, many of whom had cancer diagnoses themselves, utterly dedicated to providing a safe space, a hearth and a heartfelt welcome to all who came through the front door.

The counselling team I was to become a part of were highly trained professionals who exuded respect and admiration for the resilience and courage of their clients. This was communicated often at our clinical meetings by how these counsellors spoke of their work and the impact their clients were having on them.

As I reflect on my ten years of therapeutic work at Cancer Lifeline, I feel I can acknowledge a lot of learning on my part. My clients taught me about how normal it was to feel many different emotions when you have been diagnosed with cancer. They spoke of the stress, anger, uncertainty and sadness and how this myriad of feelings affected their daily lives. I learned about the emotional

concerns people had about their self-image, their body image and concerns about their personal relationships. Often, we worked with managing fears or worries about the future.

One of the great privileges of therapists working in Cancer Lifeline is the shared experience of the therapeutic journey with clients, whose beginning is often marked by fear and dread and often replaced with a renewed commitment to life itself. This is often evidenced by an acceptance of learning how to adjust to a whole new world of appointments, scans, results and often bell ringing in a medical corridor. The journey is often a journey from despair to renewed hope.

*“we’d like you
to help us
not to die before
we’re dead.”*

Studies have indicated that psychotherapy has the potential to improve the quality of life and coping mechanisms in cancer patients. In therapy, people process their feelings, explore ways to talk about their diagnosis with their family and friends, as well as the ability to discuss concerns they may have about the ways cancer might alter their lives. Part of the counselling process involves assessment tools that measure the progress of clients through their therapeutic journey – beginning, middle and end. The results bear out the research previously referred to, that the counselling process more often than not results in positive changes for the client.

In addition to working directly with cancer patients, I have had the privilege of working with spouses and relatives of patients including their bereaved family and friends. As I have said previously, a cancer diagnosis causes complex feelings and lifestyle changes that can be overwhelming, not just to the patient but also to the people they are close to. Often, family members share the emotional turmoil that a cancer diagnosis brings to a patient. Working therapeutically, I strive to emphasise the importance of good communication and how important it is to relationships when dealing with something such as cancer. Talking about feelings and personal needs with honesty, sincerity and openness can alleviate some of the stress on relationships. The importance of living in the present is the same for both cancer patients and their loved ones.

In summary, I recall one of my colleagues asking a group of cancer patients how he might help them as a therapist. Their response was startlingly honest when they responded “we’d like you to help us not to die before we’re dead.” In this statement, they were putting an incredible emphasis on life and a desire not to give up. They wanted to avoid going into a psychological waiting room. Instead of giving up, they still wanted to embrace all that life could offer. Even with the inevitable adjustments, enthusiasm for life is still possible. Such statements are not for the faint-hearted, but indicated real strength and courage, which is why their therapists often speak of their clients with respect and admiration.

+ Noël Treanor

**Bishop of
Down and Connor**



Pastoral Ministry in contemporary society requires and draws on personal spiritual resources, on inter-personal and organisational skills, on levels of maturity enhanced by experience reflected on and reviewed, on emotional equilibrium and resilience and on an integral and integrating self-care. The professional services offered by Daneo Human and Spiritual Development Services provide a vital resource for those who exercise pastoral ministry today in many and diverse roles and also for those who are in formation for ministry. Such initiatives, and Daneo in particular, make an irreplaceable, if sometimes under-recognised, contribution to the well-being of society as well as to those who avail of its services. For this the diocese of Down and Connor is grateful on its own behalf and together with all who avail of its services.



Margaret Webb

Member of British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP) Focusing Trainer. Spiritual Director. Psychotherapist Daneo Services.

A personal journey in the integration of psychology and spirituality

Rev. Alan Lorimer C. Psychol. PSI

If I can unite in myself the thought and the devotion of Eastern and Western Christendom, the Greek and the Latin Fathers, the Russians with the Spanish mystics, I can prepare in myself the reunion of divided Christians. From that secret and unspoken unity in myself can eventually come a visible and manifest unity of all Christians ... We must contain all divided worlds in ourselves and transcend them in Christ.

Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander by Thomas Merton

In Aug 2021 I turned 60 years old and for the past 30 years, I have been on a journey of integrating psychology and theology or more accurately psychotherapy and spirituality.

Initially, in my late 20s and 30s, I lived as if the two subjects were separate in me, parallel parts of my life. I loved the research and evidence based approach of psychology and I loved my experience of God in my charismatic, evangelical tradition. However, my friends in psychology were generally incredulous to my religious views while many of my religious friends were skeptical and even cynical of psychology. The relationship between psychology and theology was divided inside me, as well as externally. They were strangers.

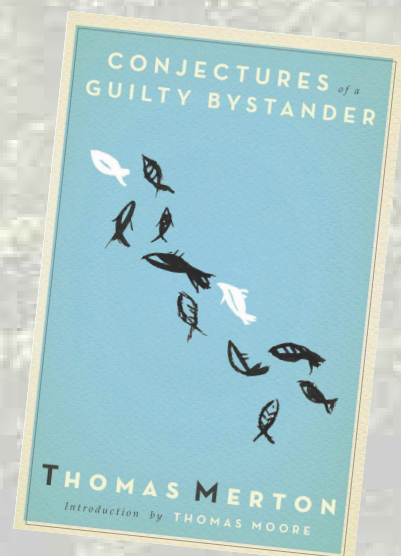
This division became more apparent when I began to study theology in preparation for ordination in the Methodist Church. It was like I had two minds, two worldviews, two types of data and I felt these two areas of my life shared a body but not a mind.

When I entered pastoral ministry, it became clear in practice, that people were not so easily categorized as just psychological or spiritual beings. Life is not so neat. People in church were often struggling with psychological issues which also impacted their spirituality.

They needed a psychological intervention and not only a spiritual intervention. For example, individuals with depression were depressed in all their relationships, which included God, and their withdrawal from church was often a symptom of depression and primarily not a spiritual issue. They needed a behavioral activation programme and not only prayer or a sermon.

This necessity pushed me to integrate these 'divided worlds', at the worldview and theoretical levels as well as integrating processes, strategies and methods. I did not want to 'bolt on' techniques and interventions from both areas. I needed to integrate with integrity my view of myself as a Methodist Minister and a psychologist. The word 'AND' became important in this endeavor.

This journey of integrating psychology and theology had to start in me before I could express it externally. As Thomas Merton said, with regards to divided Christianity, ***We must contain all divided worlds in ourselves and transcend them in Christ.***



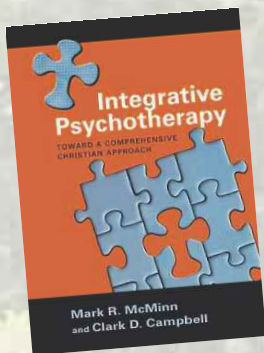
How then does theology relate to psychology? How does my work in psychotherapy relate to pastoral ministry?

Do I just bolt on God talk and prayer and call it Christian therapy? How do I include spirituality in a bio-psycho-social model? How could I add spirituality to the model with integrity?

For many years, psychologists in the USA have been at the forefront of dialogue between psychology and theology especially in organisations like the Christian Association for Psychological Studies.

In my own research I found a helpful perspective in the work of Mark McMinn.

In his model of Integral Therapy, McMinn rooted his therapy on the 'image of God'. He described the traditional understanding of the image of God as having 3 dimensions in theology, namely, functional, structural and relational dimensions. All 3 dimensions are necessary to appreciate the depth of this rich concept.



McMinn sees these 3 dimensions in the practice of psychotherapy. For example at the functional level, a school teacher who is struggling with social anxiety and unable to teach is not functioning in her vocation and thus the functional dimension of the image of God is damaged. The application of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy(CBT) techniques could be viewed as providing a means of restoration of the functional image of God in this person.

This model helped me to integrate my work in psychotherapy and pastoral ministry. In my vocation as a minister I saw myself as being part of Christ's work in restoring people to wholeness. I now saw my vocation as a psychologist in a similar vein. Both vocations were part of the restoration of the image of God in broken people. The 2 subjects were no longer parallel in me. They were in relationship.

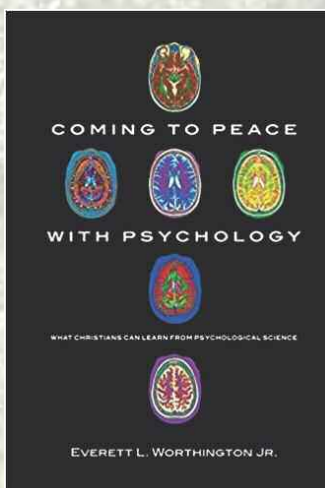
This inner integration at the worldview level led to further outer integration. In the early 2000's I began to research and practice Mindfulness based CBT(MBCT). The evidence base for MBCT had been growing especially its efficacy in helping clients who had 2 or 3 episodes of chronic depression. I used MBCT with clients as recommended but 15 years ago there was still a reluctance among some Christians around the practice of mindfulness because of its Buddhist connections. This led me to wrestle with the integration of psychotherapy and spirituality at the level of methods and techniques within clinical practice. I viewed mindfulness generally as improving ordinary awareness and saw it as a secularised technique with a strong psychological evidence base, albeit with Buddhist roots. So I began to investigate mindfulness within Christianity and this drew me to the contemplative stream of Christianity and specifically to Centering Prayer.

Centering Prayer is a contemplative method of prayer and its theological basis has been well investigated by Father Thomas Keating, among others. In Centering Prayer the intention of the individual is to consent to God's presence within. It is a surrender prayer and is not about maintaining attention by means of a mantra, unlike other types of contemplative prayer. Instead 'thoughts' (in the centering prayer tradition 'thoughts' is an umbrella term and includes emotions, physical sensations, memories and all forms of thinking) are let go and not resisted or retained. It is about ongoing consent to the Spirit within, by returning to a sacred word or breath which symbolises the intention of heart. Centering Prayer or Heartfulness is about growing in spiritual awareness.

Now a byproduct of the Centering Prayer method is that there is a decentering from thoughts. In CBT, clients are encouraged to notice their thoughts and to restructure dysfunctional thoughts usually on paper. Therefore the client is standing back from their thoughts objectively, in other words

decentering from their thoughts. They gradually learn that they are not their thoughts. Defusion techniques in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) work in a similar way. It is not the 'thought' that is problem, it is the relationship the client has with the thought that is the problem. So in Centering Prayer the letting go of thoughts enhances this decentering technique as a byproduct of the prayer itself.

This is an example of integration at the level of processes and methods and has led me to look at how Christian Spirituality can be integrated into therapy. And it also shows how the exploration of a particular clinical intervention can lead to a dialogue with theology.



In conclusion although the 2 subjects appear to be divided in the academic curriculum, in reality that is not the case. It is more akin to an ongoing relationship of 2 dance partners who start out as strangers.

(Worthington p98). Sometimes in the dance, psychology takes the lead while at other times theology takes the lead, nevertheless it is the dance and the relationship that is important.

Like any relationship there are always points and times of conflict, points and times of independence, points and times of dialogue, and points and times of integration. (See Barbour in Worthington p102). The most important point is the relationship journey itself.

On my journey of 30 years I have slowly moved from hosting 2 strangers, to joining the dance of partners; transcending in Christ firstly, the divided worlds in myself and then in the world around me.

At 60 years old I still enjoy the dance and both vocations have helped me contribute to the work of restoration of the image of God. I encourage you to dance and keep dancing.

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Rev. Alan Lorimer C. Psychol. PSI

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Holy Cross Girls Primary School: Counselling Project

Kathleen Savage RSM

During the thirty-year conflict known as the Troubles, Ardoyne became a community of very separated and segregated people. Protestants and Catholics living in separate areas. This left Holy Cross Girls, a Catholic primary school isolated, in the middle of a Protestant/Loyalist area.

In June 2001 during the last week of school before the summer break Protestant loyalists began picketing the school, claiming that Catholics were regularly attacking their homes and denying them access to facilities.

The picket resumed on 3rd September, when the new school term began. For weeks, hundreds of loyalist protesters tried to stop the schoolchildren and their parents from walking to school through “their” area. Hundreds of riot police, backed up by British soldiers, escorted the children and parents through the protest each day.

Some protesters shouted sectarian abuse and threw stones, bricks, fireworks, blast bombs and urine-filled balloons at the schoolchildren, their parents and the Police. The horrific scenes of frightened Catholic schoolgirls running a gauntlet of abuse from loyalist protesters as they walked to school captured world headlines.

Death threats were made against the parents, local clergy and school staff by a loyalist paramilitary group. The protest was condemned by both Catholics and Protestants, including politicians. Some likened the protest to child abuse.

On 23rd November, the loyalists ended the protest after being promised tighter security for their area and a redevelopment scheme. The security forces remained outside the school for several months.

It was against this background and the manifestation of trauma and psychological and emotional damage these events had caused that I was invited into the school to provide therapeutic interventions to the children who needed most help. I had no idea that the task I was undertaking at that time was pioneering work as Counselling in Primary Schools was unheard of in Northern Ireland.

At the time I was aware of only one community organisation in existence in Belfast offering emotional support to Youth. Twenty years on, I am working with up to twenty children weekly. children respond very well to early intervention and make good progress. They are offered a safe and confidential environment in which they are supported and enabled to explore whatever difficult issues they have such as trauma, fear, inattentiveness in class, and other behavioural issues.

Providing the children with counselling gives them time and space to work through their issues. They are helped to gain different perspectives on problems which enables them to regain wellbeing and balance in their lives. Using such mediums as play, sand trays and art children learn new skills and coping mechanisms and usually after some months they report on how things have changed or are feeling differently about their issues.



Working with the children I observe and experience the bonds of trust. It is gratifying to see their self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-value change and greatly improve. They become more articulate in how they describe and manage their feelings and the issues or problems they presented with such as bullying, bereavement, and divorce in the family. They learn how to stand up for themselves when bullied and practice assertion in challenging situations they may find themselves in.

The sources of feedback regarding therapeutic progress often come from parents and teachers. They report that the children look happier, describe themselves as being happy and having fun again. A notable degree of self-confidence is evident. Many report that they now no longer have nightmares, bad dreams, afraid to sleep alone or in their own bed, or are no longer afraid of everyone dying on them.

When the children complete their therapeutic work or come to the end of their primary education, they are assured that further help is available when necessary.

There is a great spirit of pastoral care for each child in the school and teachers and staff are quick to notice when children are manifesting any signs of needing help and move quickly to get that intervention from an early age. Often requests come from parents/grandparents when they see the impact of a situation on the child.

Many requests come from teachers when they see deterioration in the child's work, behaviour, physical appearance, or mood. Meetings are arranged with parents and the necessary consent is gained so the work can begin. Referrals often come from outside agencies e.g., Social Services, Child Psychologist, educational Psychologist etc. Requests can also come from local Clergy and other Pastoral Workers /Child Protection Staff involved with the child in the school or local community.

The success rate of the therapeutic work is helped by the school setting which includes the availability of a dedicated room the consistent attendance of the child and support from the pastoral care team and the extended school staff.

It is also much easier to facilitate discussion and dialogue with parents, teachers, and those who work within a nine to five schedule so that a co-operative approach is adopted, and networking is in place, with the child's welfare and best interests always at heart. Long waiting lists are preventable as most services can be availed of readily and within the working day

From my own observations and working for so long with children it gives me great happiness and job satisfaction to see the growth and development happening as children make this journey towards healing. I see increased confidence in the individual child and work-related performance increase. In conversation with teachers and parents I hear very positive feedback on the changes they see in the child both within and outside the school environment.

I firmly believe Helping children to tackle problems at an early age and find new skills and coping mechanisms greatly enhances good order in the child's life, in the classroom and ultimately spreading out into the community and family from which they come. What I love and admire most about this school and the staff is the ethos of promoting respect, inclusiveness, and tolerance and how to be peacemakers. This has been in vogue now for many years and in the individual work I undertake with each child I am further developing and enhancing what is already taught and modelled.

Over many years the school have developed very solid cross community relations with the neighbouring Protestant primary school. In helping children form a healthy self-respect and promoting the dignity of all I feel this work is the means through which we will

continue to build and promote community harmony and tolerance. Our aim is to create healthy citizenship and communities of harmony and tolerance and mutual understanding. All of this begins with the individual.

The stigma of counselling has been greatly reduced and we will continue to liaise with parents, teachers, external agencies in promoting counselling availability both within and outside the school.

The caring promoted in the school at all levels greatly enhances the work I do with the children, and we regularly monitor the ongoing individual needs of children in our care.

Parents are free and encouraged to talk to the staff and myself to review at regular intervals how the child is progressing, and I am keen to receive evaluation from the child, parents, teachers and others involved in the child's welfare.

It helps the parents grow in confidence and be at ease when they know that the child is supported and they too can access the service without fear of judgement, condemnation or anything that would compromise the child's safety as they know Child Protection is at the heart of all the work undertaken.

I believe it greatly adds to the trust and goodwill existing between the school, the parents, and individual children.

In conclusion I would say that no matter what age counselling through exploration of values, beliefs, interests, and memories, can help anyone rediscover their purpose, passion, and meaning in life.

Whether it be dealing with depression, anxiety, stress, or anger, counselling can help one identify, express, and better regulate one's emotions and what a gift we can give to our children in helping them do this from an early age.

My own philosophy and belief in helping children become well-grounded adults can best be summed up in the guidance and reflection of Dorothy Law Nolte.



If children live with criticism they learn to condemn,
If children live with hostility, they learn to fight.
If children live with fear, they learn to be apprehensive,
If children live with pity, they learn to feel sorry for themselves.
If children live with ridicule, they learn to feel shy.
If children live with jealousy, they learn to feel envy.
If children live with shame, they learn to feel guilty.
If children live with encouragement, they learn confidence.
If children live with tolerance, they learn patience
If children live with praise, they learn appreciation.
If children live with acceptance, they learn to love.
If children live with approval, they learn to like themselves.
If children live with recognition, they learn it is good to have a goal
If children live with sharing, they learn generosity,
If children live with fairness, they learn justice,
If children live with kindness and consideration, they learn respect.
If children live with security,
they learn to have faith in themselves and in those about them.
If children live with friendliness, they learn the world is a nice place in which to live.

(Dorothy Law Nolte)



Kathleen Savage RSM B.Ed.

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THE METHODIST CHURCH IN IRELAND

Daneo Human and Spiritual Development Services have been psychologically assessing candidates for the ordained ministry for the past ten years and their assessments have provided independent evidence in our own discernment process. This has been a helpful ecumenical partnership between the Methodist Church in Ireland and Daneo at the organisational level as well as the development of individual relationships between our own psychological assessor, Alan Lorimer, and John Friel.

Rev Philip Agnew

North Eastern District Superintendent

Focusing – a way of living the Paschal Mystery

Patrick Duffy CP

There is something innate in all of nature about dying and rising. It has a universal quality to it. We see it highlighted in the seasons: autumn, winter, spring and summer. The dying of autumn and winter gives way to the new life of spring and summer. Plants and animals all share in this dying and rising and so do we human beings.

In the early 1970s a number of researchers promoted the idea that the normal development of an organism might depend on the routine death and elimination of large numbers of cells. A process they called “apoptosis” (Greek word: “apopto”, “to fall off” or “fall away”). The scientist, H. Robert Horvitz was intrigued by the idea and decided to test the hypothesis on a tiny worm and he proved that “apoptosis” was actually programmed into the worm’s genes. This meant that the death of individual cells was a fundamental part of the worm’s development. Not too long afterwards it became clear that there were nearly identical genes for “apoptosis” in all complex forms of life, including the human. (Time magazine, 20th August 2001, U.S.A. edition).

This “apoptosis” is not just physical, it can also be experienced on the emotional and psychological levels too.

Chogyam Trungpa (Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior) expresses this very well when he says:

“You begin to see that there are seasons in your life in the same way as there are seasons in nature. There are times to cultivate and create, when you nurture your world and give birth to new ideas and ventures. There are times of flourishing and abundance, when life feels in full bloom, energised and expanding. And there are times of fruition, when things come to an end. They have reached their climax and must be harvested before they begin to fade. And finally, of course, there are times that are cold and cutting and empty, times when the spring of new beginnings

seems like a distant dream. Those rhythms in life are natural events. They weave into one another as day follows night, bringing, not messages of hope and fear, but messages of how things are.” (Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior by Chogyam Trungpa).

To be human is to carry in our genes the death-rebirth archetype and experience it emotionally in life’s transitions and physically in death. Taking it a step further to the psychotheological level, natural truth and divine truth are not in opposition, as Aquinas said, “The whole universe together participates in the divine goodness and represents it better than any single being whatever” (Aquinas, ST, Q.47, Art.1).

The natural world of creation is a locus of God’s revelation. The archetypal symbol of death-rebirth as a transformative process both physically and psychologically is taken up by Jesus to point to a truth about spiritual growth as well “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (John 12: 24).

Theologically His own Death and Resurrection, the Paschal Mystery, becomes a divine symbol of the transformative grace of God working in the “apoptosis” of life in the human person. The Paschal Mystery is not something outside ourselves, something that Jesus goes through and we are observers, Paul tells in Rom. 6:3-4, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into his death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life”. So to be a Christian is somehow to be plunged into the Paschal Mystery. To live the Paschal Mystery is not to glorify human suffering nor is it to avoid it but to be in relationship with it in a way that is open to being graced.

As John Dalrymple says, “The genuine Christian attitude is the optimistic one of aiming at human growth with the clear sighted recognition that that will mean the acceptance of much suffering on the way. The cross is the necessary means to Christian maturity, but certainly not its end. The grain of wheat dies only in order to increase and multiply.” (The Cross a Pasture p.92).

Focusing is a way of being present to all of our inner experience as it is carried in the body, the body in a holistic sense, being more than a physical machine, “The human body cannot be considered as a mere complex of tissues, organs and functions, rather it is a constitutive part of the person” (Pope John Paul II, August 2000).

Being present in a compassionate way to what in our inner experience is particularly difficult, painful, threatening or frightening (and indeed creative), enables change to take place in the way our issues are carried in our bodies, something that was stuck, cramped, hemmed in, loosens, softens, eases in a way that can bring fresh insight, forward movement and connection to the spiritual dimension of life. To be with, to befriend what is painful without trying to change or manipulate it in anyway is to stand at the doorway of grace, of “newness of life”. Paul experienced this in his own life, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness...for whenever I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12: 9-10).

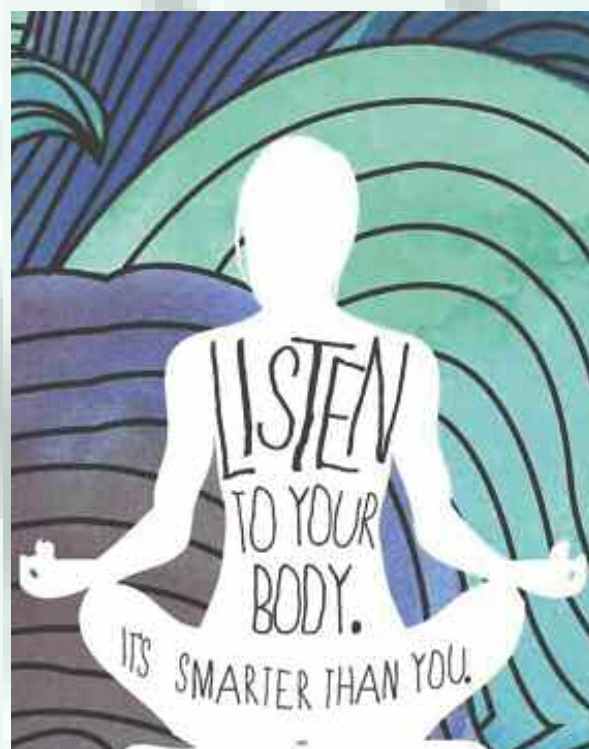
Jesus experiences it in Gethsemane, as He allows Himself to be open to His agony. His prayer changes
He is strengthened,
becoming more resolute
in the face of the confrontation that awaits Him. There is a real trust in Providence here, a surrendering as we stand at this doorway of grace. We cannot foresee or determine what the outcome will be, that is in God’s hands. Focusing predisposes us to be receptive to grace, to allow God’s Spirit to be creatively and uniquely operative in our lives. When we

are in touch with our suffering and gently accept the part of us that is in pain, it is in some way like Jesus as He suffers. With Focusing we manifest the same attitude as He did, we don't try to escape from it and we remain present to it, keeping it company trusting the outcome to Providence.

“Abandon yourself into the hands of God like a ship with neither oars nor sails, letting go of yourself totally.” St. Paul of the Cross. (In the Heart of God)

Ed McMahon (Beyond the Myth of Dominance, p.242) puts it this way, speaking of the spiritual as involving, “surrendering into the truth of oneself as this is experienced in a bodily way, allowing some power greater than myself to bless me with another step toward wholeness (holiness) personally, communally and globally”.

Focusing can be understood as a path to conversion, a change of heart, a change of direction that is a graced experience. Ed McMahon and Pete Campbell (Bio-Spirituality, Focusing as a way to grow) speak about Focusing as a way to perceive ourselves differently and open ourselves to the possibility of graced change:



“What makes Focusing unusual is that it creates an inner climate around our painful and frightening issues that is different from the climate we generally fall into with problems and difficulties. Normally, we feel bad about things we don’t like in ourselves. We sometimes feel ashamed, guilty, annoyed or impatient. We hold at arms length and try to control what we cannot accept. Focusing invites us to relate in a different way to what we perceive as unlovable in ourselves.”

Rather than remaining stuck in what we see as negative about ourselves Focusing allows us gradually, to become our true selves:

"It involves letting go of controls that hold you to a narrow and often confining experience. There is the challenge of a hidden surprise. A gift. A grace waiting in the uncertainty of that overpowering darkness from which we generally shield ourselves." (Bio –Spirituality, Focusing as a way to grow).

In the Incarnation, the human and the divine meet in a way that holds the integrity of both together without distorting either in any way, they have but one source, both have their origin in God. To live in Christ is not then to try and escape the complexity of our humanity nor to fear or despise it but to journey deeper within and with it to the wellsprings of the divine to be found there.



Pat Duffy CP BD

Accredited member Irish Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy (IACP) Certifying Focusing co-ordinator Focusing Institute New York Psychotherapist Daneo Services

To journey inward as physical, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual persons, is to journey to the threshold of the divine. Human nature in its totality reaches the frontiers of grace. Already gift the journey is graced, the whole person is graced, the human and the divine intermingle and the journey moves forward, a moment of conversion, of “apoptosis” takes place, “*grace builds on nature*”. *Grace is experienced in a whole person bodily way. “I have come that you may have life and have it to the full” (John 10:10).*

Focusing is a natural process that allows, facilitates, nurtures, that encounter and connection between grace and nature in the uniqueness of the human person. It offers an experiential way to live the Paschal Mystery as we live the “apoptosis” of life.

+ Eamon Martin

Archbishop of Armagh

Primate of All Ireland



Since 2003, Daneo Human & Spiritual Development Services have provided a valuable resource for church communities across denominations. Because they are interested in a person’s spiritual dimension as well as the emotional and physical, Daneo Services are an alternative to a strictly psychological understanding of human needs and relationships. Their work at integrating the human and spiritual connects wholeness and holiness. This provides individuals and groups opportunities to grow and develop in all the dimensions of their lives.

Perspectives on the symbiotic relationship between mental and spiritual health

Dr. Ann Long Dr. Louise Long

Introuction

This paper explores the symbiotic relationship between mental health and spiritual development. When we look outwards, spiritual growth is conducive to becoming more accepting of others, more compassionate and more confident. When we reflect inwards, spiritual health is associated with emotional and physical healing, a sense of perspective and an inner peace. Arguably, the spin-off from the virtuous upward cycle between spiritual health and mental health is a person who appreciates life's purpose. Moreover, spirituality helps us to accept that life is not without its challenges and hardships and, without any sense of entitlement, embrace tender and innocent times to be joyful.

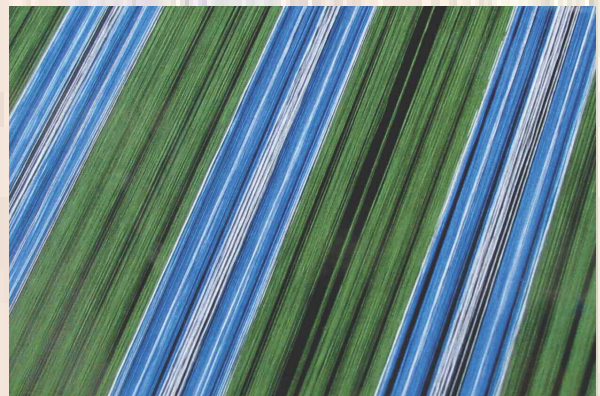
We open this paper by clarifying the concepts of spirituality and mental health. According to Haye and Nye (1998), spirituality is an exploration of our values and the meaningfulness of our lives, as well as our relationships with self, others, and a higher power. The process of spiritual development may or not involve a relationship with God, great spirit, universal mind, creator and so forth. However, it does involve a search for understanding the non-material (Huitt and Robbins, 2003). Mental health is underscored by self-awareness and being in touch with personal feelings, thoughts, desires, and spirituality

Thus, being mentally healthy and being spiritually healthy are intimately connected. We cannot be one without the other. Equally, they are active, alive, and vibrant lifelong processes rather than an ideal 'state' that we must somehow achieve. Being mentally healthy and spiritually healthy are potent and dynamic processes, which awaken the God-given spirit, or internal power, in human beings, allowing us to surrender into

communion with self, others, a God of our understanding and the natural world we live in. We do this by becoming self-aware, and by demonstrating compassion and empathy for self and others and our suffering planet. Being mentally and spiritually healthy manifests as having a true value of all people, including self, as unique individuals and, therefore, an awareness of the existence of a Higher Power, and one humanity in an evolving world.

Arguably, mental, and spiritual health is a process of equilibrium both within and between the inner and outer Self, the social environment, and the natural world. All individuals are born with the capacity to grow and develop from life's experiences, including suffering, loss, trauma, and pain. No matter how shut down, repressed, or betrayed we feel, we can find evidence of the authentic core self: a unique, vibrant, and passionate individual. For, no matter how damaging the pain might be, the soul can never be extinguished.

For the purposes of this paper, spiritual development and mental health are symbolised as delicate, coloured threads, which are interwoven into the exquisite tapestry of humankind's lived experiences and search for an understanding of the purpose of life.



The outer world

Blue

The blue thread on the tapestry of life shows that we have as many reactions as possible to changing life circumstances and to the diversity of internal and external stimuli presented to us every day. Being mentally and spiritually healthy means achieving a balance between the outer and the inner world. This is more difficult for some than it is for others. We may, in fact, be living in a society that positively gives rise to stress coupled with very little peace.

Moreover, there is a growing recognition of the relationship between behaviour and environment, collectively as well as individually. The norms of health and sickness are social, legal, and cultural norms: thus, the concepts of mental health and spiritual health are tricky and atrociously difficult to define.

Yellow

The yellow thread on the tapestry highlights that it is problematic for some people to sustain and maintain mental and spiritual health in a climate where poverty and unemployment are paramount; where there is gross inequality; social injustice and social disadvantage. Those individuals who belong to minority groups are undervalued and deprived of equitable opportunities and equal civil liberties and are faced with barriers to their personal, social, educational well-being and well-becoming. All this, coupled with the pressures of advertising and the media, with its suggestions of norms of 'happiness' friendship and sexual satisfaction and the subsequent feelings of inadequacy among those who have not accomplished and possibly will never achieve, those social and advertiser's norms. Therefore, society too, is constantly redefining the concept of mental ill health.

Orange

The orange thread demonstrates there are new advances in scientific knowledge and understanding, which facilitate recognition

and awareness of the suffering that living in an industrial society. This suffering is a product of the emphasis on the power of wealth, the importance of material possessions and the dominance of educational qualifications including computer literacy. Materialism leaves many people even more vulnerable to mental and spiritual health imbalance. For example, severe depression and phobia through to the whole array of sexual, marital, and human relationship problems for which it is both humane and realistic to offer high quality counselling care.

Green

Embroidered in the tapestry of life, the green thread speaks to the protection and care of the natural world wherein God's creation is a network of interconnected life and not a pyramid where humankind is at the top. The call is made for humankind to surrender Ego self-importance to ECO.

John O Donohue (2008) said it eloquently:

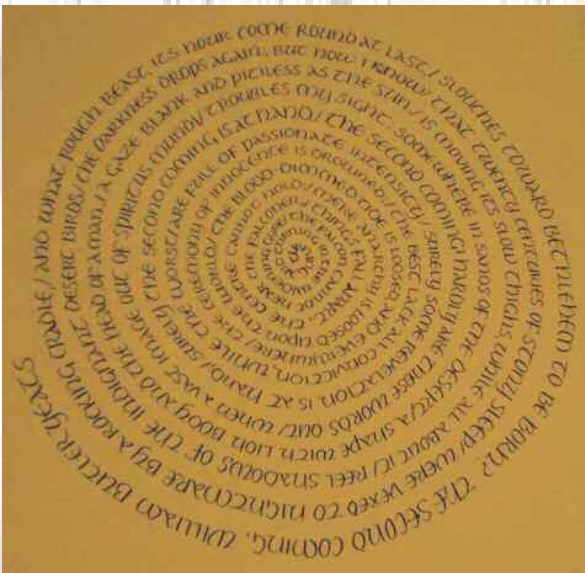
**Leave our locked minds,
and with freed senses
Feel the earth,
Breathing with us.**

Spirituality means maintaining a sense of awe and wonder in the world and having an appreciation of life. For example, it fills us full of wonder when we use our imagination and gaze at the planet earth from the moon, we see rich blues and greens, shrouded in white spiralling clouds. We can visualise the entirety, that small fragile whole against the ambience of deep dark space. Separate land formations can no longer be seen, nor dividers of continents. We see the earth in its totality and recognise our reliance on all its parts and feel a longing to send compassion and love for this whole world.

The inner world: suffering and joy

Purple

The purple thread of the tapestry of life illustrates the inner world that can be depicted using the narrative of the passion of Christ.



In *The Second Coming*, the Irish poet, W.B. Yeats describes the best of humanity as lacking all conviction and the worst of humanity as being full of passionate intensity. Arguably, in Yeats' view, passion is visceral, atavistic, and uncontrollable as opposed to virtuous, rational, and contained. Perhaps Yeats' choice of words is not surprising given that he wrote *The Second Coming* in the aftermath of World War 1 and on the cusp of the Irish War of Independence. However, somewhat divergent from Yeats' conceptualisation of passion as obsessiveness to the point of destruction, the meaning of passion in the story of Christ has its origins in the Latin, "a willingness to suffer for what you love".

***Angela came to Daneo because her young son had been diagnosed with cancer and she could not cope. She felt comforted in the counselling care she received.**

The Passion of Christ is a series of powerful events that begins on Palm Sunday when Jesus enters Jerusalem to the adulation of the crowd. It goes on to describe the painful time spent in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Last Supper and Jesus' arrest and trial.

***Brian came to Daneo for counselling because he had been given nine months to live and was suffering from immense physical, mental, and spiritual pain.**

The Passion of Christ culminates on Good Friday when Jesus dies by crucifixion.

***Jim and Lucy came to Daneo because their only son had recently died from a drug overdose.**

Christ means the anointed one, which identifies Jesus as the Messiah, prophesised from the book of Genesis.

***Caitlin came to Daneo because she had just had a miscarriage and was grieving for her unborn child.**

Gold

The purple tapestry of *The Passion of Christ* is woven together by the golden thread of God the Father's steadfast, unconditional, and continuous love for His Creation, including humankind. Moreover, such is the immensity and authenticity of God's love that He was miraculously incarnate in the human body of Jesus and suffered willingly for all His Creation.

God bless everyone who place their feet across the threshold of Daneo

Christ's suffering foretells that life on earth can be hard. His Passion is a story of endurance in the face of injustice, unfairness, despondency, doubt, humiliation, betrayal, aloneness, and shame.

***Dorothy came to Daneo because of abuse in childhood. She found a safe space in Daneo.**

Jesus experienced these emotions in the same way that we experience them. Before Christ was taken up to Heaven, he asked God the Father to forgive those who had persecuted him, because in His eyes, they did not know what they were doing. Far harder to forgive those who do not know what they are doing. Christ taught us to turn the other cheek, which is not the same as being a pushover or weak. This assertive and peaceful act is a refusal to dehumanise ourselves and others.

***Eileen came to Daneo because she was in an abusive relationship. She was taught how to see assertiveness as a graced gift.**

In 'What's So Amazing About Grace?', Philip Yancey presents a compelling argument that to forgive with grace sets us free from the pain of negative emotions and opens the door for transformation in self and others. Those who turn a kind eye towards others whilst concurrently turning the other cheek, will bring forth goodness in them. Jesus forgave Peter and Peter forgave himself for his cowardice in denying Jesus. Forgiveness enabled Peter to redeem himself and move forward to achieve good things as a Christian leader and disciple of Christ.

Like a little flower, it seems that human beings, like Christ, must work through our 'dark night of the soul' embodied in our mental and spiritual pain before transcendence and transformation might happen.

**Christ came not to explain suffering
Nor to take it away
But to fill it with His Presence**

The resurrection

The good news is that the Passion of Christ is part of a bigger picture that includes the Resurrection. This redemptive event reassures us that while life is hard, God is good. Laughter and joy add dignity to the human experience. This joy flows from and is nurtured by God's love, strength, grace, wisdom goodness and guidance. To paraphrase Saint Teresa of Avila, ours are the eyes through which the "com- passion" of Christ looks out into the world, ours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good and, ours are the hands with which, He is to bless others now.

Before Jesus was taken up to Heaven, he asked his disciples to 'let go' of Him and promised the gift of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the holy spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and gentleness (Galatians 5:22-23.). For Christians, the resurrection of

Jesus Christ means that the Holy Spirit will be poured out into the hearts of those who believe. After Jesus' death the promised Holy Spirit continues His work on earth. This means that Christ's earthly ministry continues today through His people in whom He dwells by the Holy Spirit. An important question for us to ask is, 'What is the spirit telling us about how Jesus is responding lovingly to the present situation in the world and Christian churches today, and how is He inviting us to respond?'

The Romans and Pharisees perceived Christ as a dissenter, a weirdo, an anarchist, and a threat to the status quo. We see him as a man of relationships who nurtured the disciples' talents with a vision for the future of his church on earth. It is incumbent on all of us to follow Him with wisdom and ethical intelligence by doing no harm, respecting others, being fair, making things better and being loving (Weinstein, 2011). Likewise, God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity but of power, love and self-discipline, the heart to love others, the way Jesus did (Timothy 1-7). The clarion call is made for humankind to turn its face to the fundamental question of what it is that makes, and more importantly, keeps people human (Ramsey, 1999).

We believe, like Carl Jung, that we have the potential to outgrow mental and spiritual pain and wonder if this happens through the maxims of transcendence and transformation. These acts are most significant, and they acquire a perspective that promotes healing. It is desirable to remember that severe mental and spiritual wounding changes the perspective of human beings who afterwards see the world through 'the veil of woundedness'.

Silver

The silver thread of the tapestry of life demonstrates one path towards healing namely the process of counselling, which means pondering curiously into 'the dark night of the soul'. This is a sacred act of

transcending and transforming mental and spiritual pain into higher level human qualities and beliefs. Attending counselling involves a tough but thoughtful adventure with rewards that far surpass any unresolved trauma. It is important to remember that the soul moves at a slow pace. Surviving inner mental and spiritual pain means confronting the pain, identifying the source, and reclaiming our inner spirit. 'When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide us into the light. He illuminates the dark areas of our lives and gives us a clear vision of God's purpose for us' (John 16:13). It is vital to note that counsellors themselves must submit to the 'dark night of the soul' so that they can emerge into the light alongside the clients. Counsellors cannot 'sit thoughtfully and compassionately' with other people unless they have first 'sat thoughtfully and compassionately' with themselves. Counsellors who embrace personal growth and development can work in communion with others and act as catalysts to help them release and transform painful emotions.

Olive

The olive thread of the tapestry of life shows us that the ability to transcend life's hurdles never ceases, with many regressions into our own personal space where we retreat, renew, and reinvent. Later, we emerge with a sense of relief and a healed vision for the future, or we may endure the inner darkness that pervades for long periods, which makes it difficult to project a brighter future.

A major factor hidden within the olive thread of our lives and the process of transforming mental and spiritual pain is to forgive ourselves, with grace, and to invite God to forgive others. Forgiveness, which is not the same as pardon, leads to such outcomes as the alleviation of shame and resentment and discarding the painful world view.

What a wonderful prospect for counsellors and other healers to be equipped with the knowledge that they are wounded healers who have been inspirational in transforming

their own mental and spiritual health and enthusing that of others. Counsellors are instrumental in creating a safe sacred space and a 'witnessing presence' that acts as an antidote to the self-destructiveness of severely mentally and spiritually wounded individuals.

Conclusion

On reflection, the backcloth on the tapestry of our lives illustrates that Jesus' passion and our lives run on parallel train tracks. We travel at different speeds (rate of growth), stopping at different stations (life-experiences) and are joined together like train tracks are, by shared spiritual and mental lows. The end point is the same for us as it was for Jesus...victorious redemption. In Jung's mind, it is not the fall from grace that defines us but how we pick ourselves up and embark on new adventures. We cannot really appreciate life until we have 'gone off the rails' or been 'knocked down' a few times.

In summary, spiritual suffering is inextricably linked with the negative emotions of mental ill-health. These emotions are universal and form part of the core of humankind's painful lived experiences. This paper uses the Passion of Christ as a narrative in spiritual and mental lows, which mirror what humans endure during our lives on earth. He walked the walk that human being's walk. The mental and spiritual lows associated with suffering form part of the inclusive tapestry of interconnectedness. This suffering transcends cultures, class race, religion. It is uplifting and inspiring to learn that a journey through the 'dark night of the soul' is a journey of transcendence and transformation, it is a faith journey, a pilgrimage through the pastoral, our stories of life, death, resurrection, and new life.

* The names used are fictitious names are used for anonymity purposes



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Holy Cross Girl's School Counselling

Our school is in an area of social deprivation with high levels of suicide, separation, domestic violence and depression. Our school counsellor, from Daneo, has worked with our pupils for over 20 years and this service has been absolutely invaluable.

The children's resilience and self-esteem has been positively impacted, enabling them to access the curriculum more fully. They have been equipped with strategies to deal with anxieties and worries.

The parents have also been greatly supported in times of difficulty.

Huge numbers of children have greatly benefitted from the counselling service and we pray this continues.

Kathy Owens
(Principal)



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