



# Shared Visions

A publication to assist in the spiritual formation of lay volunteers  
presented by The Saint Vincent Pallotti Center

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We know what you're thinking: "Not another publication telling me I need to have a proper diet and exercise in order to stay healthy. What does staying healthy have to do with my spirituality? Or, for that matter, what does my health have to do with my ministry, my stance on justice and peace issues, or my community life?"

Well folks, before you put this issue of *Shared Visions* in the recycle bin, give us a chance to share with you several ideas from former and current volunteers which illustrate how your health can influence your spirituality and how your spirituality is linked to your health.

### FEATURE:

## Caring For the Care-Giver

by Colleen Pritchard

(Colleen worked as a lay missionary for four years and now serves as the Volunteer Coordinator at V.E.S.S.)

During my second year as a volunteer at St. Bonaventure Indian Mission in New Mexico, I went home for the holidays. After a day or two, as the initial excitement wore off, my family's deeper response to my visit showed through: disappointment. They were not glad to see me because they said, "there isn't much of you left". I was hurt and confused. Several close friends had alluded to the same thing weeks earlier and I had been angry at

their words. But I realized during my visit that they were right. I had no energy and not much of myself left.

I had given myself away rather than shared my life and talents with others.

This was when I realized I needed to take care of myself. I could no longer afford 15-hour days. So I began doing little things to care for myself: saying "no" when I meant "no", not taking on extra duties when I knew I was tired, praying with my roommates, exercising more, and getting enough sleep. Caring for the care-giver was a struggle for me, but it was necessary to my "survival" as a volunteer and it was part of the process of transforming myself that is so important in volunteer work.

Three or four times a year during my service, I felt a need to go on a retreat or off alone. It was an overwhelming need during those times and the rest of my life took a back seat. So I would traipse off and "fill the need". I realized it was God's way of trying to get my attention and show me how important this was to the quality of my life as a volunteer. I needed to fill myself back up.

The first few months after I left the Mission were difficult. I had spent so much time on my work that I didn't know what to do with my free time. I was used to filling up my time with work, but now it wasn't enough. So I began, slowly, to weave my life together again. I found time to do the activities I had enjoyed before I went to the Mission and began to try new things. I realized that the need to develop my spiritual life was there all along, but, at

times, I had substituted my work for my spiritual life. This worked for awhile, but eventually there was a deeper call to grow in new ways.

— listening to my inner voice—

It has been five years since I first became a volunteer and I am finally listening to my inner voice. Here are the things it says:

- Take care of yourself. You know what you want and need. Do the things that "feed your soul". You tend to stop doing all those activities once you become a volunteer. You can't be anything to anyone else unless you take care of yourself.
- Ask for what you need. It can be time alone or someone to listen to you. Asking is being true to yourself.
- Pace yourself. Don't try to do everything the first 3 months. It will take you most of the year to do half of what you thought you'd get done.
- Lead a balanced life. Spend time alone each day. Spend time in meditation/prayer each day. The quiet will help you accept the changes and growth in yourself and others.
- A balanced life affects community. Your personal, professional, and spiritual lives are all interdependent and affect your community life, which is important. Shared life is a shared prayer. To keep the balance, give each aspect of your life equal time.

Volunteers are generally idealists who feel guilty for taking care of themselves. We want to give everything we have, but we should have something of ourselves left at the end of the year. I now realize I can't serve others at the expense of myself. We should share all that we are with the organization we work with, but we must care for the care-giver. Burnout is high in volunteer work and for good reasons. We are working at our highest level

*continued on next page*

emotionally in caring for others. Our expectations of ourself, our work, and our community are very high.

Volunteering is not going out to save the world. It's going out to do what we can and to be transformed in the process. If we are miserable and burned out the first two months of serving, what good are we the rest of the year? Eventually we begin to resent the people we serve and serve with for "making me feel this way." Leading a balanced life and taking care of ourself will ensure that we'll be able to give our whole self to each experience. It's a great investment! †

*(Suggested Reading: "When I Say 'No' I Feel Guilty" by Manuel J. Smith Ph.D., Bantam Books, NY, NY © 1975 324 pages \$5.50*

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**FEATURE: Connecting  
Physically and Spiritually**  
*by Louise McHarris*

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*(Louise is currently serving at the AIDS Volunteer Network in Detroit with Passionist Lay Missioners.)*

One of the primary reasons I am spending this year as a lay volunteer is my conviction that our physical experience as human beings is inextricably intertwined with our spirituality. It is also one of the primary reasons I feel called to do social justice work, probably for the rest of my life.

I believe that there is no split between a spiritual plane and an earthly plane. They are one and the same, which is similar to saying that God is everywhere, in everything.

On a personal level, I feel my most spiritual connection to the world through dance. For me, dance embodies the ultimate junction of physical work and artistic creation. Dancing keeps me sane and allows me to think clearly. Taking a dance class or going to a rehearsal brings about an exhilarating connection between myself and other dancers. It is a community experience.

Part of it is that dancing makes me emotionally and physically healthier. As a form of art, it is also an exercise of my creativity, and as such is very spiritual. Dance allows me to let go of stress by reminding me, through

the pure enjoyment I get from dancing, that no problem is so big that it cancels out the beauty and importance of my connection to other people, the world, and to God.

Physical activities that are a spiritual experience can be different for different people, covering a wide spectrum that includes the physical high that some runners experience, the physical creativity of painting, and the ecstasy of connecting to the outdoors through hiking.

Along with this personal level, I feel that this connection between the physical and spiritual is also an important part of how we view the world. To me, there's a strong connection between the oppression of the masses and the belief that there is a split between the earth and the spiritual domain. When people exaggerate the contrast between these two realms, it can become an excuse to ignore people's suffering due to poverty and injustice. Jesus, by working with the poor and oppressed, demonstrated the need to acknowledge the presence of physical suffering and oppression, and to struggle toward their elimination. He exemplified the importance of connecting our spirituality to the physical world. Doing the social justice work that is part of being a lay volunteer is one way I try to carry that out.

I have a request for all of you. Take the time for yourself, if you don't already do so, to participate in a physical activity that you enjoy. At the same time, think about how this activity makes you feel, spiritually and physically. There is much to be gained in feeling a connection between yourself and the world around you. †

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**FEATURE:**

**Gym as Mission**  
*by Terence Miller*

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*(Terence is currently a lay missionary with Maryknoll.)*

During my three and 1/2 years as a lay missionary with Maryknoll, the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America, one of the things I learned was that a person of faith could talk about one's call and response to the Christian gospel in a sweaty, weight-

filled gym in Linares, Chile.

Exercise has always been important to me as a way to release tension especially as a public defender in Brooklyn, New York. When I joined Maryknoll and went to South America I remained committed to finding time in my daily routine for exercise.

The first few months in Linares I would take advantage of the flat countryside that surrounds the town to take long bike rides to release the tension of my inculturation. After a few months I wanted to vary my form of exercise and I asked around to find that there was one gym in town. The gym was in a rundown old house. The free weights were pretty beat up, but I decided to join because they had aerobics classes which I thought would be a great way to vary my workout.

I had been accustomed to people staring when I walked down the main street of Linares. Apart from the people of the poor neighborhood where I lived and the diocesan human rights office I worked out of, many people would look up quizzically at this tall gringo. I couldn't be a tourist because Linares wasn't on the map; and besides I stayed around too long. But by seeing me in the gym day after day a barrier went down and a barrage of questions would be asked, "Why are you in Linares?" "Why would you ever want to leave the United States to come to Chile?" I would simply respond by saying that after hearing the gospel message for 30 years I had to respond by living that message. The people who used the gym were also Catholic and they heard the gospel message but for them, being religious meant going to Church on Sunday not leaving family and friends for three years to work for a better world. The weight lifting would stop. We would talk about our spirituality, values and hopes.

The owner of the gym, Alejandro, would always ask me questions about my work in investigating the disappeared, tortured and executed from the military coup that occurred in Chile in 1973. After about a month, Alejandro brought me into his office, sat me down and explained the reason why he was so fascinated by my work. He was fifteen years old and the president of his school the day of the military coup. He was arrested, taken to

*continued on page 3*

jail and tortured by the military for 3 months. Through our conversations, he was able to identify the torturers and helped to fill in what occurred during the last days of many of the disappeared. He later testified before the National Commission of Truth and Reconciliation that was investigating these atrocities.

After leaving Chile and coming to Washington, DC, I began to miss the depth of the conversation that Chileans were so willing to share with me. Faith and the way it was lived out was a challenge that was talked about over lifting weights--uniting the spiritual with the physical.

As far as I'm concerned, gyms in the United States are much too quiet.

#### BOOK REVIEW:

### **Diet for a New America.**

by John Robbins,

Stillpoint Publishing, Wapole, NH,

copyright 1987, 387 pages, \$12.95.

(Reviewed by Leah Sealey of the St. Vincent Pallotti Center, National Office.)

*"A missionary was walking in Africa when he heard the ominous padding of a lion behind him. 'Oh Lord,' prayed the missionary, 'Grant in Thy goodness that the lion walking behind me is a good Christian lion.'*

*And then, in the silence that followed, the missionary heard the lion praying too: 'Oh Lord, he prayed, 'We thank Thee for the food which we are about to receive.' --Cleveland Amory (Quote taken from Diet for a New America.)*

As the quote above illustrates, it all depends upon your perspective. John Robbins, the author of *Diet for a New America*, could have obliged his family by following the course already set for him by running the family owned Baskin-Robbins corporation. Robbins had no intention of doing so. Instead he chose to report the amazing things he discov-

ered while thoroughly investigating the meat and dairy industries and the people who profit from them. (Not really what you'd expect from an ice cream man.) His purpose: to enlighten Americans and to explain the consequences of continuing our current dietary habits.

Robbins questions the "facts" we were given as school age children about nutrition and acquiring protein through the "four basic food groups" charts and visual aids the meat and dairy industries supplied to our teachers. Through the propaganda of these two strong political lobbies they hoped to raise the next, no-questions-asked, generation of meat and dairy eating Americans. As a result of our early drilling, Robbins writes, "We have become protein obsessed, and we pay an incalculable price for it. We feed an enormous amount of grain to livestock which could otherwise be fed to the world's hungry. We cause a great deal of needless suffering to animals. And finally, we seriously compromise our health."

Robbins reports several jaw-dropping findings on how the meat and dairy industries skew the results of nutrition experiments in order to keep the American public in the dark. One example deals with protein. The "idea (that animal protein is essential for a healthy diet) arose after a meat/dairy sponsored experiment found that rats which were fed animal protein grew faster--failing to mention they also died sooner than their vegetarian counterparts."

Robbins not only focuses on how we have been duped by the meat and dairy industries but that as a result we welcome such diseases as cancer, diabetes, osteoporosis, ulcers, and multiple sclerosis (to name a few) into our bodies, in part by our food choices. Robbins sights case studies where patients inflicted with these diseases improved or alleviated their conditions by changing their dietary habits and by excluding all meat and dairy products.

He also points out that the harmful chemicals, pushed by yet another strong political lobby group--the chemical companies-- are over-used in order to yield the highest amount of feed for livestock. Chemically treated feed, along with drugs, are used to fatten livestock quickly and to keep them "healthy" enough to make it to the slaughterhouse. Thus, Robbins suggests, there is a possibility that these chemicals and drugs could go into our bodies when we eat their flesh.

Robbins' final chapter, "All Things Are Connected", brings home his idea that our survival is dependent upon changes in our eating habits. Raising meat for consumption overuses our water supply which in turn depletes our energy supply, which then inflates costs for energy. Rain forests are cleared in third world nations (taking the place of subsistence farming) lessening our oxygen supply, in order to grow feed for livestock. Destroying the rain forests eliminates known and undiscovered animal and plant species--plant species which may hold medicinal cures to our world's deadly diseases. Our continual overuse of the land destroys valuable topsoil and perpetuates the already heavy use of pesticides.

After reading *Diet for a New America*, I have concluded that in order to live justly, I need to fully consider what foods I eat. Granted, I may not become a pure vegetarian cold turkey (pardon the pun), but now I feel better able to make a conscious and informed decision on whether or not to eat animal and dairy products and to understand the consequences of doing so.

I highly recommend this book but beware, you may never walk into a McDonald's again!

(Is there another point of view that needs to be heard? Write us with yours.)

## Shared Visions Worksheet

Louise McHarris' article describes how physical activities can be a spiritual experience. To what extent, if any, do you find connections between your physical and your spiritual world? Describe by an example.

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Colleen Pritchard's article speaks about the importance of volunteers listening to and pacing themselves. To what extent do you see yourself being like either of Aesop's fabled characters, the tortoise or the hare? Does your inner voice tell you that you've been like the methodical tortoise? The burned out rabbit? How would you describe your pace?

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Terence Miller's piece underscores cultural differences he experienced in the way the townspeople of Linares and many people in the U.S. approach physical exercise. When you are getting ready to participate in a physical exercise or sport, to what extent is it for you:

\_\_\_\_\_ exclusively physical; \_\_\_ mainly physical; \_\_\_\_\_ exclusively social;  
\_\_\_\_\_ mainly social; \_\_\_\_\_ a balance of each.

Explain your answer.

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Volunteers tell us they sometimes say "yes" more than they should. Below is a test to get you thinking & talking about the extent to which you are able to say "no."

Score yourself using the following scale:

1 = definitely not true of me      4 = mostly true  
2 = mostly untrue                      5 = definitely true  
3 = 1/2 and 1/2

- I find myself quickly saying "yes" and then almost immediately wishing I hadn't. \_\_\_\_
- Whenever I give myself a break or retreat, I feel guilty I'm not helping others. \_\_\_\_
- If a priest or sister asked me to give up an evening to work in a homeless shelter, I'd have a difficult time saying "no." \_\_\_\_
- I find it hard to turn down a friend even when I have a legitimate reason. \_\_\_\_
- I seem to be able to rescue everyone but myself. \_\_\_\_
- I'd love to spend time with a therapist to figure out why I can't say "no" to helping everyone else. \_\_\_\_
- Even if I am exhausted and needed the weekend off, I still say "yes" to my supervisor's request that I work that weekend. \_\_\_\_
- In helping someone else, I often have missed meals even when I'm famished. \_\_\_\_

**Add up your total:** \_\_\_\_\_

Results: If you've scored 0 to 7: you cheated on the test  
8 to 15: you've got a strong backbone  
16 to 23: you're on the fence  
24 to 32: stay out of deep water, you're a jelly fish  
33 to 40: please send us your address...got a job for you.

## WORKOUT TIPS

The following facts and information have been compiled from brochures and May 3, 1990 USA TODAY health articles all provided by the President's Council on Physical Fitness.

### MAXIMUM WORKOUT BENEFITS

For cardiovascular fitness, train 3-5 days a week, exercising continuously for 20-60 minutes at 80% of your maximum heart rate (see FEEL THE BEAT story on this page).

For muscular strength and endurance, do some kind of resistance training - weight lifting etc. - at least twice a week. The minimum is one set of 8-12 repetitions of 8-10 exercises.

In order to gain weight that's lean muscle and lose weight that's fat, find out what your body fat percentage is at your local YMCA or health club. Base your exercise and dieting programs on strategies to bring your body fat within a target range.

Men should have no more than 16% body fat; women should have no more than 23%.



### FEEL THE BEAT

The easiest way to monitor your heart rate is by placing two fingers on your radial artery, just below the base of your thumb.

Practice a few times so you can feel the beat easily. Count the number of beats in 10 seconds, then multiply by six to get your heart rate, or beats per minute.

As you train your heart to function more efficiently and powerfully during exercise, you'll lower your resting heart rate and reduce the time it takes your pulse to return to normal. But how do you know how hard to work your heart?

In cardiovascular training, the principal reference point is **maximum exercising heart rate**, computed by deducting your age from 220.

Most cardiovascular programs call for exercising at approximately 80% of maximum exercising heart rate. For example, 30 year olds have an estimated maximum exercising heart rate of 190. When they train, they need to push their hearts to approximately 152 beats per minute.

### HOW TO START A RUNNING REGIMEN

No one can tell you exactly how far you should walk/run at the beginning. Exercise capacity varies widely, even in individuals of similar age and build. Here's a rule of thumb to follow:

- After you warm up, walk briskly until you are moving easily.
- Run at a comfortable pace until you begin to become winded or tired or both. Walk until you're ready to run again.
- Repeat this cycle for 20 minutes.

The more often you run, the faster you will improve. At least five workouts a week are recommended for persons trying to raise their level of fitness. Three workouts a week generally are considered to be the minimum number needed to maintain a desirable state of fitness.



(NOTE: If you are considering any major change in your exercise or diet, we encourage you to first consult with a physician.)



*FITNESS HELPS YOU TO . . . LOOK AND FEEL BETTER. Reduced fat and increased muscle tone gives you that healthy-looking rosy glow. LIVE BETTER. Exercisers are less likely to develop life-threatening diseases. Studies show that people who exercise not only live longer, but have an improved quality of life in their later years. RELAX. Exercise decreases stress and relieves tensions.*

### MORE FREE INFORMATION & FURTHER READING ON FITNESS:

- The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. 450 5th Street, N.W., Suite 7103, Washington, DC 20001. Ideas for fitness programs for kids, adults and fitness leaders along with fitness self-tests. (We found the brochures on "Exercise and Weight Control", "Walking for Exercise and Pleasure" and "Fitness Fundamentals" to be especially helpful.)
- The YMCA. 101 North Wacker Drive, Chicago, IL 60606. Can put you in touch with a Y program near you.
- The Rockport Walking Institute. 72 Howe Street, Marlboro, MA 01752-2827. Has a new cardiovascular self-test and complete walking program for fitness.
- The National Recreation and Park Association. 1800 Silas Deane Highway, Suite 1, Rocky Hill, CT 06067. Will tell you about community recreation programs - especially for kids - in your region.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON DIET STYLE WRITE:**

- American Meat Institute, 1700 N. Moore St., Arlington, VA 22209
- Center for Science in the Public Interest/Americans for Safe Food, 1501 16th St. NW, Washington, DC 20036
- National Dairy Promotion and Research Board. 2111 Wilson Blvd. #600, Arlington, VA 22201
- North American Vegetarian Society, PO Box 72, Dolgeville, NY 13329

**The mission of the Saint Vincent Pallotti Center:**

To promote lay volunteer service that challenges the laity, clergy and religious to work together in the mission of the Church. Our goal is to support lay volunteers before, during and after their term of service. Local Pallotti centers are located in Boston, Memphis, Saint Louis and San Francisco. The National Office is in Washington, DC.

The centers take their inspiration from Saint Vincent Pallotti (1795-1850) who believed passionately in the laity, in each person as being an Image of God and as called to be missionary.

**Shared Visions' goal is to explore five "building blocks" of spiritual development: Intellectual Growth, Emotional and Physical Health, Leadership and Prayer.**

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