



# Shared Visions

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

— The people who bring you Connections —

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Volume Nine, Number One

## BALANCE...

- \* In work and play
- \* With self and others
- \* In prayer and action
- \* In health and food
- \* Of inner-peace



## Inside this issue...

- \* Articles written by former volunteers who have "been there" during those first few months and know how challenging and rewarding they can be
- \* Worksheet to help you organize your priorities
- \* A quiz to see how you react to chaos
- \* Biblical reflection on the stirrings within

### The Stirrings Within

by Cathy Manderfield  
Mercy Corps

*"Every morning I awake torn between a desire to save the world and an inclination to savor it. This makes it hard to plan the day."*  
~E.B. White

After graduating with a degree in Social Work from James Madison University, I couldn't wait to get out into the world with the hope of making a difference. Volunteering in Philadelphia for a year with Mercy Corps seemed like the perfect opportunity because it offered me a medium through which to channel some of the knowledge, experience, and enthusiasm I'd been accumulating in school.

When I arrived in Philadelphia, I hit the ground running. Project H.O.M.E. opened my eyes to the countless needs facing the poor and homeless in Philadelphia. It also offered me plenty of opportunities to contribute to the hope they were supplying to so many on a daily basis. One of the hardest parts about the job was going home at the end of the day knowing there was more to be done. Yet, the beautiful thing about it was that at Project H.O.M.E., hope was obtainable because needs could be met. Granted there never seemed to be enough time in the day or enough hands doing the work, but the opportunity for change was within reach if you were willing to join with others to do whatever was needed.

Needless to say, my community, with which I had desired to share this year, didn't see a whole lot of me. I was "torn" on many occasions by the "desire" to do, do, do, and the "inclination" to be present to my need for alone time as well as to appreciate the accompaniment of a community. The "desire" to do, however, seemed to take over most of my days because I

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### Peaks and Valleys

by Matt Madden  
Jesuit Volunteer Corps, Rostro de Cristo

In an effort to rediscover my mindset fourteen months ago as I started my year in Guayaquil, Ecuador, I have been perusing my photos from the orientation/retreat we attended in Washington, DC before departing. I cannot contain embarrassed, self-deprecating laughter when I look at my smug, little smile as I stood together with my new housemates on the stairs of the Washington Retreat House. Today, as I sit here thinking about the way I was, I immediately disavow any of the naive and idealistic thoughts that were racing through my mind. I was so clueless.

For a number of reasons, choosing to go to Ecuador with the Rostro de Cristo (Face of Christ) Program was a very difficult decision for me. I was just finishing up a year with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps in Boston and I was strongly considering staying on at the shelter where I was working. On the surface, I liked Boston very much and really didn't want to leave the strong community of friends and support system I had there. But delving deeper into the depths and insecurities of my mind, I knew that going to Guayaquil was the right decision for me. Yet I was also truly frightened at where a year there would leave me. This would be another year of service, another year of consciously choosing to witness injustice and poverty up close rather than diverting my eyes. Would it burden me with a responsibility that would alienate me from the world in which I grew up? In an effort to discern whether I should go or not, I actually wrote a letter to Fr. Ronan, the director of Rostro de Cristo, explaining why I was not going to do the program. But I was ashamed to even reread the letter to myself. This helped me realize it was time to say goodbye to Boston and JVC and start afresh in the not so appropriately named Pearl of the Pacific (this is Guayaquil's

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***"This would be another year of service, another year of consciously choosing to witness injustice and poverty up close rather than diverting my eyes."***

was learning so much from people who seemed so different from me. Taking time out to "savor" my experience was not a priority for me when there was so much to be done, and I received so much through doing it. Despite the "inclination" to do less and "savor" more, I was determined and satisfied that my work was all I needed.

As my time in Philadelphia began to wind down, I felt very fortunate and changed by the whole volunteer experience, yet somehow restless for more. Although I have no regrets concerning my time spent at Project H.O.M.E., there was a realization that in throwing myself into the work, I missed out on an invitation to really appreciate the rest of the package Mercy Corps had offered me. It wasn't until later in the year that I realized the value of the gift I'd passed up in seldom spending time with and being present to my community. When I expressed my realization and sense of restlessness to Mercy Corps' staff, they offered me the opportunity to experience another year as a P.E. Teacher in San Francisco to help shed some light as to what seemed unfinished in Philadelphia.

I was energized by the potential waiting for me in San Francisco to uncover the answers to questions I couldn't quite name. Once there, new realizations and questions were begging for my attention and challenged me to look beyond the service for insights. As the year went on, I was frustrated daily by my discomfort in working with the kids. My time in Philly hardly seemed like work, yet every day in San Francisco seemed like a challenge for me with results that were seldom seen in the immediate.

Although I learned a lot, everyday was work and a lesson in humility as I went to others for guidance or support for a

job I could not seem to master. In order to keep my wits about me, I tried to be more present and appreciative to the moments at hand and to "savor" them rather than turn them into motivations to do more. I learned so much by spending more time simply being with the kids, co-workers, and my community and discovering the gift and value in their accompaniment. They were helping me to see much about myself and life that I didn't see before. We supported each other when our jobs didn't seem to energize us, and we encouraged one another to take time away from all the doing to "savor" what's going on within and around us.

My years with Mercy Corp have taught me that life is about transition. Our lives will forever be about change and growth if we are open to being led by what God is stirring within us. As my time in San Francisco began to wind down, I felt very fortunate and changed once again by the whole volunteer experience, yet somehow lacking the closure I thought I was looking for in doing another year. It wasn't until just recently, four months after leaving California,

that I discovered what I think I was looking for in my second year. Balance. My first year I loved my work and missed out on community. My second year I made community a priority, and yet missed time to myself to really process what was stirring within me.

I've learned that life is not about either saving the world or savoring it; it's about finding a balance for both. As I look back over the years, I discovered that it was in those quiet moments that I stole for myself that I gained the insights needed to answer a question, to further the discussion, or to simply appreciate what is. As each of us travels farther along the road of life, we will transition almost every step of the way. How much clearer the directions seem when we take the time to be aware of what is stirring within us. +

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### Questions for Cathy's article:

1. By nature, are you a "do, do, do" person, or are you a reflective "savor" the moment type? What benefits can you see to the other inclination? What type are your housemates? How can you learn from other people's approaches?
2. Cathy had a chance to do another year of service to work on things she felt she missed her first year. Well, tomorrow is a new day. What do you want to work on in your daily life to help get the most out of your volunteer experience?
3. Cathy came to appreciate time spent just "being" with those around her. Who is accompanying you now or who has helped you get here? Write them or find a way to show these special people how much their "accompaniment" means to you.

### nutrition

### Healthy Tips Toward a Balanced Diet



**Need more protein?** Try a handful of nuts, or add tofu to any recipe.

**Need more greens?** Try darker lettuce-- NOT iceberg (it's all water).

**Need more fruits?** Try 100% fruit juice rather than a juice blend.

**Need overall balance?** Try a daily multi-vitamin. Generic brands can be cheaper. Shop around.

Look at your budget and do the most you can to buy healthy and wholesome foods.



What are the **TOP 10 THINGS** that have surprised you the most since you started volunteering? The aroma of someone's socks? The amount of time that goes into discussing grocery shopping? Get your community together and come up with a list. Post it to remind you that community life has its challenges, but can be humorous, too!

*"Peaks and Valleys" continued from page 1*

nickname— not the cleanest city I've ever lived in). So I packed a smug smile, an excited mind, two duffel bags full of warm weather clothes, and a confused agenda and took off for South America.

What was my agenda? I was definitely lured by the novelty of doing something entirely unknown and drastically different from my previous

sheltered experiences. I also looked forward to the opportunity to deepen my commitment to and understanding of the values I had begun to cultivate during my JVC year. Those often counter-cultural values were social justice, community living, simple lifestyle and spirituality. I thought that being so isolated from everyone and everything that I knew would particularly motivate me to focus more on my spiritual life.

What I found out was that my six housemates and I not only had some vastly different motivations but that these priorities were in a constant state of flux and change. For the most part, we could pick and choose what we did. I taught English in both a grade school and a high school. I coached baseball,

led retreats for Ecuadorians and immersion programs for kids from the U.S. I also volunteered at a Hansen's Disease hospital and did a bunch of

other things. But I was initially very frustrated by my own lack of initiative, both within and without and often felt utterly confused and lost.

"Why in God's name had I come here?" was a question that plagued me more than a few times. These periods, often intensified by physical illness, left me wallowing in endless seas of apathy, depression, and self-doubt where I would question everything about this world and the next. I became obsessive about playing chess, spades, hearts, and trivial pursuit, but sometimes couldn't find a minute for prayer or reflection.

Though I can't recall a specific event or awakening that rescued me from the valleys, there was a slow progression within me. It

transformed my "why did I come here?" question to "why has God so blessed me to have put such incredible people in my path?" I think of Jaime, Angelica, and Enrique and his family accepting me as one of their own. I think of being blown away by the strength and simplicity of so many Ecuadorians' faith. I think of my students constantly correcting my Spanish, misbehaving in class and then acting like angels when I was being observed by the boss. I think of sitting around in the darkness of power outages with my housemates, sweating and being eaten alive by mosquitoes. I think of selfishly getting stuck looking for tangible differences due to my presence. Later, I realized that the intangibles; namely, that I sincerely cared for my students and the people there and that they cared about me, made everything worthwhile.

Now, looking back on all this, I remember writing an essay senior year in college. It had an extraordinarily

grandiose theme— how to live in a capitalistic, fragmented society as a Christian, using St. Francis of Assisi as the paradigm of a true Christian. But I don't remember a single conclusion or point I made in that paper. I am also remembering that clueless guy staring into the camera confidently chock full of expectations and energy. But I don't recall putting an end to the lack of social justice in Latin America or saving the country from the ravages of El Niño. I didn't solve that question in my senior essay nor did I always keep to the agenda I set for myself in Ecuador. But I thank God daily for the privilege of having been there -- sharing, learning and feeling so fully alive. +

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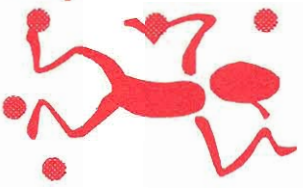
***"...I thank God daily for the privilege of having been there -- sharing, learning and feeling so fully alive."***

***Questions for Matt's article:***

1. Matt doubted why he was in Guayaquil. How do you handle doubts and self-doubt? Often doubts creep in when our expectations are not being met. Can you evaluate your own expectations for personal change or for making a "tangible difference?" Have you talked to other volunteers about the ways they have dealt with this?

2. A first-century Christian, St. Ireneaus, said: "The glory of God is man [sic] fully alive." The time of volunteering, as Matt said, can sometimes provide these experiences. To what extent have you had experiences in which you came close to or felt "fully alive?" Discuss and compare your experiences with housemates, co-workers or a friend.

# juggling with your life



Do you ever feel like you are playing catch-up in your life? Like you are missing out on everything because you are caught up with one thing? There is so much to juggle between work, community, prayer, family and self!

Are there any major opportunities associated with your current volunteer situation that you're not taking advantage of? As a starter, rate yourself on the following areas of life using a scale of 1-10 with one being the lowest priority and ten being the highest priority. See how you are living and compare your score with how you want to live. Then come up with ways to get to your ideal.

AREAS OF LIFE	How much of a priority does this area have in my life NOW?	What priority do I WISH this area had in my life?	Tangible ways to make my potential priorities my REALITY...
Living simply My spirituality/ prayer life Gaining valuable work experience Building open lines of communication at work or in community Appreciating the local culture Self-discovery Maintaining relationships at home Alone time Deciding what I want to do when I grow up Other:			



# Confront, Deny or Run Away Screaming?

**How well do you handle challenging situations in your life? Do you rely on your favorite defense mechanisms as your "out" or are you the one to always hash out the issues? Take this quick quiz and then see how you rate. Be honest (and a bit creative with our suggested responses).**

**Your housemate plays music late at night when you are trying to sleep. Do you:**

- A. Visit a third housemate's room and stay up all night sharing childhood memories until the music stops?
- B. Start making up reasons to excuse your housemate's behavior?
- C. Confront your offending housemate to seek a resolution?
- D. Scream at your housemate proclaiming him as the reason your house doesn't get along?



**It is your turn to plan community night and you are the only one who shows up. Do you:**

- A. Quietly clean up the living room and kitchen, turn on a movie and forget about the whole night?
- B. Rebuff their apologies, pretending it's not a big deal, and say you're just glad they had a good night?
- C. Talk to your program's staff for constructive ways to approach your community to tell them you felt hurt?
- D. Throw your homemade pasta dish on the first housemate to walk in the door that night?

**As you are getting ready to leave work, another crisis occurs and your boss asks you to stay a few more hours. Do you:**

- A. Stay, but throw on music and day-dream about your upcoming time off?
- B. Stay at work and feel good that your "yes" avoided making the boss mad at you?
- C. Tell your boss the truth-- that you have other plans and can stay for a little bit, but need to draw the line?
- D. Stay at work but quietly think about all the put-downs you would have liked to have said?

**You think about going to a local parish mass on Sunday but don't know where to go. Do you:**

- A. Say all religion is subjective and arbitrary anyway, so you pick the first one listed in the phone book?
- B. Decide to sleep in and cook brunch together since everyone else is doing that?
- C. Think about your preferences and start asking around about local parishes and their liturgies?
- D. Remember the last church you tried where you felt unwelcome, so in retaliation, you decide to not go at all?

**Which letter did you pick most often? Read below that letter first, but you may relate to all of these! (There are hidden resources in all of our debriefings below-- so check them out.)**

**A:** You tend to use distraction as a means of avoiding problems. When you feel the desire to change topics or make everyone laugh, think for a moment. Maybe it would be more fruitful to approach the real problem.

**B:** You rely on placating and appeasing other people. Try being honest and sticking up for yourself every once in a while. People will feel more comfortable around you if they know you are honest and not just giving in all the time.

**C:** You are able to come up with new ideas, learn from others and put your feelings into words. When difficulties arise, you can turn to resources such as your program's staff. You can also remember what has made you happy and peaceful in the past and try to put those into practice.

**D:** You seem to cope with challenges by using anger and blaming others. Take a step back and think before you act. Are you going to hurt someone's feelings? If so, don't react. Reflection and planning need to be a part of your daily life.

**DISCLAIMER:** This is NOT an official, psychological quiz. It is meant to be taken lightly. The resources listed above pertain to all types of people, not just those who answered only A's or B's, etc. When distraught or confused, talk to your community, family, co-workers or program staff. Share what helps you during tough times and perhaps that will help them, too!

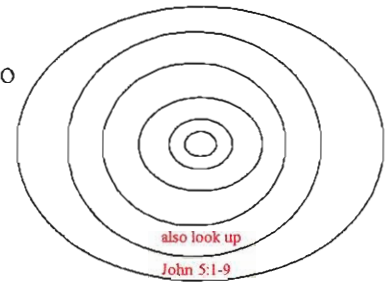
## Biblical Reflection: Looking on as God Stirs Things Within

Cathy encouraged us to think about what God is "**stirring within us.**" Think of biblical stories you know in which God is at work stirring up change. Use your imagination to tap into the Gospel writers' symbolism. Here are some examples:

Jesus feels a strong need to get away from the crowd and his work in order to find space to pray ( **John 6:11-15**);

God nurtures us to grow and transform even though we may be unaware ( **Mark 4:26-29**);

Jesus changes water into wine, symbolizing his transforming of our humanity into divinity ( **John 2: 1-11**).



How might these biblical images of change apply to your spiritual life as a volunteer?

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

To promote lay volunteer service that challenges 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, Paterson, St. Louis and Sacramento. 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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