

# **CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

Catholic spirituality is the living out of the Faith given to us by the Church. In order to live out the faith, we need the grace of God and the knowledge of God, human nature and especially self-knowledge (who we are). The Church is the Divine instrument given to us by God as a custodian and guide for our knowledge of Faith and our spiritual and moral development. Living a fully integrated and faith filled spiritual life allows one to maintain a right relationship with God.

God is a person, so the first and most important interpersonal relationship is with God who is our creator, savior and sanctifier. All other human personal relationships flow from this primary relationship that we have with God. All

dysfunctional human relationships originate from sin and sin by its definition is a rupture in the relationship with God.

### **Human Relationships in the Beginning**

The Church teaches God created everything out of nothing and that all creation is good. The apex of God's creative work was Adam and Eve, our first parents. Adam and Eve were given the gift of original justice (sanctifying grace) and three preternatural gifts (infused knowledge, bodily immortality and integrity).

Because of the gift of sanctifying grace, Adam and Eve were in a state of justification --right relationship with God. Their relationship between each other (interpersonal relationship) was also ordered and healthy. Notice that their relationship

with God was in proper order and therefore their relationship between each other was proper and healthy.

### **Gifts Given to Adam and Eve**

Adam received the gift of sanctifying grace and the three preternatural gifts not as an individual person, but as head of the human race, and thus for the whole human race. They were a present to human nature and, according to the positive ordinance of God, were to be transmitted with nature to all the heirs of that nature.

Because of the sin of Adam, the human race lost these gifts. Through the passion, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, the gift of sanctifying grace is made available to us in the sacrament of baptism and this grace puts us in a

right relationship with God. However, the three preternatural gifts that were lost by Adam's sin were not reinstated by the redemptive act of Jesus. The preternatural gifts were given to Adam and the human race to elevate human nature for the purpose of a paradise here on earth. Jesus reveals to us that He has prepared for us a gift that far exceeds the earthly paradise given to Adam. This gift is that of the heavenly paradise where we will see God face to face and be with Him and all the Saints for eternity.

### The Three Preternatural Gifts

Adam had the **gift of bodily immortality** and as long as he did not sin (rupture his relationship with God) he could not die. Because of Adam's sin, the gift of bodily immortality was lost and death came into the

world. Not only did Adam die, but all of humanity also must experience physical death.

Jesus as the “New Adam” overcomes this death by His Resurrection. So the lost preternatural gift of bodily immortality is reconstituted by Jesus with the promise of a resurrected body at the end of the world.

The **gift of infused knowledge** provided Adam with knowledge regarding God and His attributes, the moral law or man's relations to God, and the physical universe both material and spiritual. The gift of knowledge lost by Adam's sin has manifested itself in today's culture as a deeply flawed and distorted view of God or even worse a denial of his existence. Much of contemporary culture also fails to recognize any moral absolutes and disregards any sense of obedience to the moral

commandments. The excessive emphasis on modern science, technology and the physical world has led to the trivialization or ultimate denial of any spiritual world or spiritual reality.

Jesus through His Church and the sanctifying grace received in Baptism provides his followers with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety and Fear of the Lord. The gift of Wisdom recognizes that the spiritual world not only exists but is of a higher order than the physical world. The gift of Wisdom also helps us to order our relationship to the created world properly, loving Creation for the sake of God, rather than for its own sake.

The **gift of integrity** effected a harmonious relation between flesh and spirit by completely

subordinating man's lower passions to his reason. This gift has been lost and now much of the world is enslaved by its lower passions (sex, greed, power and control). This failure to order the lower passions to reason is one of the fundamental reasons why most interpersonal relationships are challenged and unhealthy. Jesus provides the grace necessary to heal relationships and to strengthen virtue so that interpersonal relationships are healthy and ordered.

### **Human Nature**

Human nature shares many of the same attributes as the animals do. We however are different because we have an intellect that allows us to reason and a will that is free and allows us to choose. These two powers, intellect and will are spiritual powers that need to be engaged when we

experience various life events that provoke all sorts of feelings and emotions. Feelings and emotions are not morally right or wrong by themselves. They are simply our subjective responses to life experiences. How and why we act on or react to these feelings and emotions determine the morality (right or wrong) of the action.

So feelings and emotions need to be identified by our intellect as to what they are and then once identified our will must choose the proper response with the guidance of the intellect.

For example, someone that we know says something unkind about us. Our initial response is to become angry. At this time, we should look to engage the intellect and identify the emotion by saying, “you are feeling angry right now because of



the unkind remark”. The intellect also should ask the following questions:

Does the remark contain any truth that can teach me something about myself and if it does I need to try to change my behavior or the way I look at this particular situation. I need to use this opportunity to grow spiritually.

Why is the person making this type of remark at this time? Is this person angry about something? Does this person have a good sense of self? If so, I can view the remark as being genuine. Perhaps the person wants to exert some type of psychological control over me by using false criticism to get into a superior position in the relationship by distorting my sense of self.

Does this person exemplify characteristics of self-hatred? If so, then the unkind remark is the manifestation of that person's own self-hatred. The proper response then should lead us to react with compassion instead of anger.

These questions will allow the intellect to probe the interchange in a deeper way to try to discover the hidden reasons for the unkind remark.

Catholic spirituality recognizes the need to live an integrated life. The intellect and will must be engaged when dealing with the lower passions. It is sad to say that the majority of the people do not engage the intellect at all when it comes to feelings and emotions. They oftentimes can't even identify what they are feeling (which is the first step in the process). They allow the feelings and emotions (lower passions) to run their lives.

The growth and development of any individual in the spiritual life requires the right ordering of the lower passions to the higher spiritual faculties (intellect and will). You can be 40, 50 or 60 years old biologically and still be a child or adolescent in the spiritual life.

The dysfunctional relationships that occur between persons oftentimes will ultimately stem from the ego (the wrong sense of self) and the sin of pride (trying to justify the wrong sense of self).

### **The Three Ego States**

We are largely formed by our experiences in our lives. To some extent we are programmed by our

individual and psychological histories to live and react to life experiences based on certain ego states. These ego states can be divided into three categories: **the Parent, the Adult** and **the Child**.

The **Parent ego state** is the set of feelings, thinking and behavior that we have copied from our parents and significant others. It relates to all of our experiences and messages stored in us from infancy and childhood. These messages are not ours but have been given to us by our parents and other adult caregivers. When we react to life experiences in the parent ego state we are simply mimicking those same responses that we learned from our parents or caregivers. In this ego state we are not fully alive but in effect living, feeling, thinking and behaving the life of someone else.

Those people that live in the parent ego state oftentimes worship their family system, structure, traditions and sometimes family members (mommy and daddy). They have been instructed that family is the most important thing in life. If they decide to venture away from the family cocoon they are vilified.

The purpose of family structure is to nurture you physically, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually and not to hinder or retard your relationship with God.

To slavishly inculcate feelings, thinking and behavior based on parental example without critical examination leads to living a disingenuous life that lacks true freedom and oftentimes will result in living life in a psychological jail.

The **Adult ego state** is the real me, the real person capable of making my own decisions and thinking my own thoughts. It is the ego state that we should strive to occupy in order to have a full and genuine life. In this state we deal with things that are going on in the present in ways that are not unhealthily influenced by our past. The intellect is fully engaged and the lower passions are not denied, but identified and subordinated to the intellect and will.

The **Child ego state** is the set of behaviors, thoughts and feelings which are replayed from our past. These past events in most instances occurred at a time when we were children and emotionally and psychologically vulnerable and impressionable. Take for example an abusive parent that yells at a child and always tells the child he is no good and will be a failure in life. The child views the parent figure almost as a god. Therefore the child truly believes that he/she is no good.

As the child matures into adulthood it is critically important to live in the adult ego state. The child ego state has to be examined for what it is and the bad tapes and memories of the dysfunctional childhood have to be erased. The intellect has to be engaged and identify that the parent that made these comments was wrong and needs to be forgiven. Here again, accepting the love and forgiveness of Jesus and His grace is necessary as a means of healing.

So as we live life and have various experiences, we are presented with these three ego states that we will choose when responding to our life experiences. The adult ego state has to be assertive, because if not, the whole future of the person will be nothing more than living out the programming of the past. The Parent or Child ego state will then end up dominating the life of the person.

Understanding the various ego states helps us to start to develop better and deeper knowledge of ourselves and others. In addition to the ego states, the activity of the mind also needs to be explored. We have a conscious mind and a subconscious mind. The mind in its entirety can be likened to an iceberg in the ocean; the visible portion (conscious mind) represents 5% of the iceberg whereas the submerged portion (subconscious mind) represents 95% of the iceberg. So it is with the conscious and subconscious mind, what we know consciously represents a very small portion of what the mind contains.

### **Conscious vs. Subconscious Mind**

[http://www.internet-of-the-mind.com/thought\\_creates\\_reality.html](http://www.internet-of-the-mind.com/thought_creates_reality.html)



The subconscious mind also has an integral part in shaping how we perceive ourselves and others. We have a conscious mind and a subconscious mind. Your subconscious mind is like a computer hard-drive and your conscious mind is like the computer screen. The hard-drive is full of data - your personal history. It contains details of every significant emotional event and these events are stored in there. There's an elaborate library, a highly sophisticated database, and a DVD video collection of your life stored on the hard-drive of your subconscious mind.

But all you can do - consciously - is see what happens to be on the screen at the time. In other words... you can direct your awareness from one place to another but not to the entire contents of the hard-drive all at once...nor would you want to!

## The Power of the Subconscious Mind

The subconscious mind performs an incredible number of functions on its own. The subconscious mind processes sensory data at the rate of approximately forty thousand bits per second! (Sensory data = hear, see, feel, smell, and taste data).

Did you know that thanks to subconscious perception and highly specialized sensory pathways most drivers speeding along the Interstate at 70 mph are in a hypnotic trance?

That's right; when driving conditions are "routine" most drivers are not fully conscious of driving their vehicles. Their subconscious perception is doing most of the driving for them.

You've done it yourself many times... Remember all those times you arrived at your destination but didn't remember the trip?

When people drive while talking on their cell phone they are relying a bit too heavily on subconscious perception... But the fact that there are not more accidents due to this behavior is a testament to subconscious perception.

Yes, even those huge 18 wheelers are being driven by someone in a naturalistic hypnotic trance...some deeper than others...the more routine, the deeper the trance.

The subconscious mind is the ultimate multitasker... it can pay attention to all these things and run your heart, kidneys and other bodily functions all at the same time.

Concentration of awareness takes effort. Sooner or later we would relax our concentration at the wrong time. Subconscious perception never takes a break unless we are in a deep dreamless sleep...even then it can be suddenly aroused.

Your subconscious mind knows when to ask for help. Certain neural networks are given higher priorities than others. Even though the brain is a powerful multitasker, it knows how and when to get your attention. Survival networks are given the highest priority of all.

For example, when driving conditions are NOT routine, such as during a snowstorm, our conscious awareness returns - sometimes with a vengeance.

Our fight-or-flight response kicks in and we can feel the adrenalin pumping through our system. Fear and hyper-vigilance take over. It would be hard to doze off in this situation.

More than 90% of what we do everyday is carried out by a subconscious programs (Neural Networks)... putting on our shoes, taking a shower, driving to work...all completed by our subconscious mind leaving us free to focus on our to-do list and the day ahead.

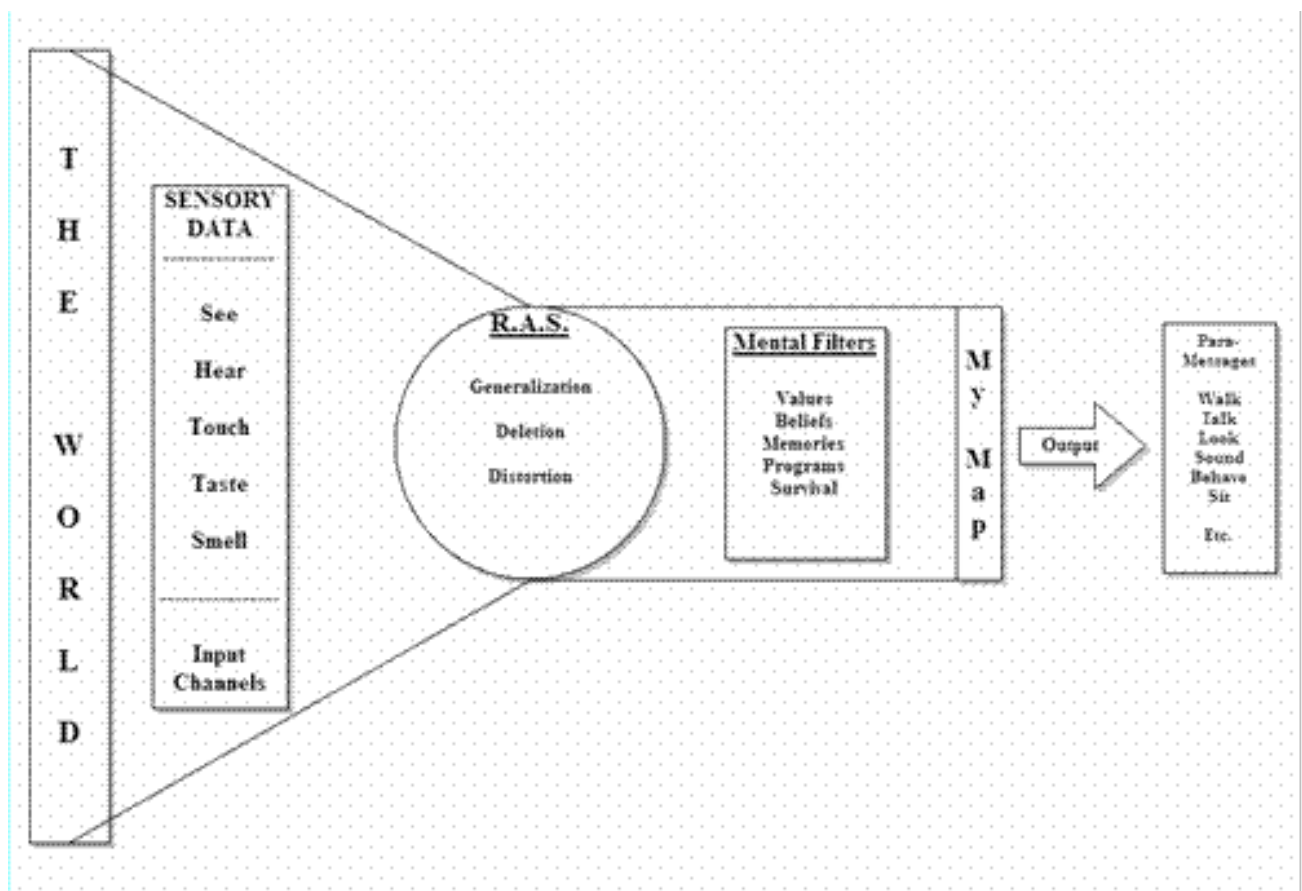
To demonstrate... I'd like you to consciously raise one of your arms straight out to the side. Now, notice that I said consciously raise your arm...

To raise your arm consciously means you must know which of 159 muscles to activate first... at

what intensity... and in what sequence to activate the remaining 158 in order to accomplish this.

I don't know about you... but I didn't even know that there were that many muscles involved... much less which ones they are. Yet I can easily raise my arm, just don't ask me how! The subconscious mind does the rest.

## How We Filter Information to Store in the Subconscious Mind



The first thing that we must be able to do is to take in raw sensory data from "the World".

Most people have use of five Input Channels to receive raw sensory data from the world around us...

- Visual (sight)
- Auditory (sound)
- Kinesthetic (touch)
- Olfactory (smell)
- Gustatory (taste).

At any given moment there are somewhere in the neighborhood of two million bits of sensory data trying to make their way into the subconscious mind.

The subconscious mind can only process about 40,000 bits of incoming data per second so incoming data must be sorted into two categories - that which is important to me... and that which is NOT important to me.

### **Generalization, Deletion, and Distortion**

The Reticular Activating System (RAS) uses three universal brain processes - Generalization, Deletion, and Distortion - to complete the sorting and selection of data for input. Unimportant data gets deleted by the - the proverbial in-one-ear-and- out-the-other! Think of the RAS as the doorman of the subconscious mind. It sorts out and allows in those data which are important to me and screens-out those data which are not. The RAS is a key factor involved in perception vs reality by allowing in only



data that supports my current map (the way I view myself and the world).

## Mental Filters

We have several primary mental filters that tell the doorman (the Reticular Activating System (RAS)) of our subconscious mind what's important to us (see diagram above)...These filters are:

- My Sense-of-Self or Identity - How I see myself... what I think of myself... how I feel about myself.
- My Values - Things that are most important to me...these are usually just beneath the surface of our awareness if we have never taken the time to sort them out...but they are very powerful motivators of our choices and our behaviors.

- My Strongly-Held Beliefs - Right or wrong...good or bad...helpful or limiting...these are the beliefs we hold about ourselves, other people, life, and the world in general.

- My Memories and Experiences - Every significant emotional event... pleasant or unpleasant is stored on the hard-drive of our subconscious mind.

- My Programs - Over 90% of our actions and reactions in a given day are carried out automatically by neural networks in our brain.

- My Survival Needs - Of all the brain processes survival is given the highest priority... so anything related to our survival goes to the head of the line for processing by the brain.

If these primary mental filters are distorted, then data that is allowed to enter the subconscious mind is filtered and distorted. This then results in our view of ourselves and the world we live in to be radically different from what actually is.

## **Psychology and Catholic Spirituality**

The science of psychology is a relatively new science that is only several hundred years old. This science confirms what the Church has taught for 2,000 years that human nature is wounded from the sin of Adam and the loss of sanctifying grace and the preternatural gifts. The intellect is darkened and the will is weak. What happens objectively in reality is distorted by the RAS (Reticular Activating System) so that the data conforms itself to our subjective view of ourselves and of the world (our Map). So

lacking a fully integrated spiritual life in Christ, we don't perceive things as they really are, we distort reality.

Not only do we distort reality, we also surround ourselves with people who share the same "Map" of reality. These people are enablers in the sense that they reaffirm our bad "Map" as being correct.

It is often said that those people past the age of 40 are very unlikely to change their "Map" of the world. This is where the Church teaches that we must constantly undergo conversion. Conversion is nothing else than taking objective reality that we come to know more clearly by God's grace and then changing our subjective "Map" so that it conforms to what really is. This is difficult to accomplish when we can't admit that we are wrong. It is a lot easier to surround ourselves with like-minded people who

make us feel comfortable and never challenge us to take a hard look at our map of the world.

Below is an example of how a bad map distorts the actual events that have really occurred:

- John comes in for a counseling session... He states his main concern is that he is "not worth caring about"... The counselor notices that John has been married for 15 years... He asks, "what about your wife, doesn't she care about you?"

John says... "No, she doesn't care about me either and every since I can remember no one has ever cared about me... I've resigned myself to the fact that I'm just not worth caring about."

The counselor has trouble accepting this. He asks John... "I'd like to come and stay at your house over the weekend just to observe and see for myself if your wife really doesn't care about you."

John agrees to allow this... the weekend comes and goes... John and the counselor meet in session the following week...

The counselor opens by saying, "John, I counted a total of 63 caring messages from your wife to you over the weekend"... John says... "You're kidding - I didn't even hear one!"

The counselor plays a tape recording he'd made - Sure enough, there were 63 messages that could be considered caring from John's wife to him on the recording.

John's response... "Oh, she just wanted something!"

The **generalization** was John's strongly held belief – "I'm not worth caring about".

Any incoming caring messages - visual, auditory (hearing) or kinesthetic (touch) - that did not support the belief were **deleted** by John... They went "in-one-ear-and-out-the-other".

But John could NOT **delete** the messages on the tape recording... So, his "doorman" **distorted** them to fit his belief with a defense mechanism... rationalization, in this case.

The end result was that the brain processes of **generalization**, **deletion**, and **distortion** helped John sort for the data that would support his strongly held belief that he isn't worth caring about.

So we see the effect the subconscious mind has on our true sense of self. Oftentimes we don't really know who we are.

We all have a certain "map" that sums up how we view ourselves, other people and the outside world. This map has been formed by our parents and caregivers and our life experiences. The adult ego state has to critically examine this "map" and also the mental filters to make sure that what is truly happening in the objective world outside the mind corresponds to the subjective world that we have established as our map. If we do not accept this



challenge then we will go through life with a bad map and a distorted view of reality.

Adjusting our “Map” to the objective reality is necessary in order to begin the process of establishing healthy interpersonal relationships with others. The primary sin that really affects interpersonal relationships is the sin of pride. Pride is a distorted sense of self. It has been often said that the vice of pride will leave all of us a half hour after we have experienced physical death. In other words, we all are afflicted with it and must battle continually to suppress it.

In psychological terms we come to know the ego as the sense of self (who we are). Pride basically looks to exalt or distort the sense of self (ego) at the expense of others, particularly God. Even those that profess that they are no good distort the fact that

God created them in His image and likeness and to make this assertion is to distort their true sense of self.

The primary inclination of pride is to be God like. To be God like from the human perspective is to exercise control of situations, events and most importantly other people. Modern psychology has uncovered this psychological condition and has identified it as codependency.

### **Codependency**

Codependency is defined as a psychological condition or a relationship in which a person is controlled or manipulated by another person. It refers to the dependence on the needs of, or control of, another. A codependent will either look to control or be controlled by another person.

Following is a list of symptoms of codependents. You needn't have them all to qualify as codependent.

- Low self-esteem. Feeling that you're not good enough or comparing yourself to others are signs of low self-esteem. People with low self-esteem identify who they are based upon what they have, how they look or what they do. Deciding who you are based upon your physical appearance, economic status, social status, academic accomplishments etc. is an easy trap to fall into. The developed spiritual person recognizes God created them and died for them. The true sense of self proceeds forth from this fact and not material or social phenomena.

- People-pleasing. It is also known as "human respect" We all want to be liked by other people;

the question is on what terms? People pleasers don't consider their own self-worth or identity, but look to surrender all sense of self to receive the passing approval of others. People pleasers oftentimes don't have any personal boundaries because they are solely interested in being liked by someone else, so they can't afford to establish a contrary position to those whom they seek to please. Codependents usually have a hard time saying "No" to anyone. They go out of their way and sacrifice their own needs to accommodate other people.

- Poor boundaries. Boundaries are sort of an imaginary line between you and others. It divides up what's yours and somebody else's, and that applies not only to your body, money, and belongings, but also to your feelings, thoughts and needs. That's especially where codependents get into trouble. They have blurry or weak boundaries.

They feel responsible for other people's feelings and problems or blame their own on someone else.

- Reactivity. A consequence of poor boundaries is that you react to everyone's thoughts and feelings. If someone says something you disagree with, you either believe it or become defensive. You absorb their words, because there's no boundary. With a boundary, you'd realize it was just their opinion and not a reflection of you and not feel threatened by disagreements.

- Caretaking. The "Mommy syndrome" is another effect of poor boundaries. People feel a need to solve everyone else's problem to the point that you give up yourself in the process. It's natural to feel empathy and sympathy for someone, but codependents start putting other people ahead of themselves. In fact, they need to help and might

feel rejected if another person doesn't want help. Moreover, they keep trying to help and fix the other person, even when that person clearly isn't taking their advice.

- Control. Control helps codependents feel safe and secure. Everyone needs some control over events in their life. You wouldn't want to live in constant uncertainty and chaos, but for codependents, control limits their ability to take risks and share their feelings. Sometimes they have an addiction that either helps them loosen up, like alcoholism, or helps them hold their feelings down, like workaholism, so that they don't feel out of control. Codependents also need to control those close to them, because they need other people to behave in a certain way to feel okay. In fact, people-pleasing and care-taking can be used to control and manipulate people. Alternatively, codependents are

bossy and tell you what you should or shouldn't do. This is a violation of someone else's boundary.

- Dysfunctional communication. Codependents have trouble when it comes to communicating their thoughts, feelings and needs. Of course, if you don't know what you think, feel or need, this becomes a problem. Other times, you know, but you won't own up to your truth. You're afraid to be truthful, because you don't want to upset someone else. Instead of saying, "I don't like that," you might pretend that it's okay or tell someone what to do. Communication becomes dishonest and confusing when you try to manipulate the other person out of fear.

- Obsessions. Codependents have a tendency to spend their time thinking about other people or relationships. This is caused by their dependency

and anxieties and fears. They can also become obsessed when they think they've made or might make a "mistake." Sometimes you can lapse into fantasy about how you'd like things to be or about someone you love as a way to avoid the pain of the present. This is one way to stay in denial, discussed below, but it keeps you from living your life.

- Dependency. Codependents need other people to like them to feel okay about themselves. They're afraid of being rejected or abandoned, even if they can function on their own. Others need always to be in a relationship, because they feel depressed or lonely when they're by themselves for too long. This trait makes it hard for them to end a relationship, even when the relationship is painful or abusive. They end up feeling trapped.



- Denial. One of the problems people face in getting help for codependency is that they're in denial about it, meaning that they don't face their problem. Usually they think the problem is someone else or the situation. They either keep complaining or trying to fix the other person, or go from one relationship or job to another and never own up the fact that they have a problem. Codependents also deny their feelings and needs. Often, they don't know what they're feeling and are instead focused on what others are feeling. The same thing goes for their needs. They pay attention to other people's needs and not their own. They might be in denial of their need for space and autonomy. Although some codependents seem needy, others act like they're self-sufficient when it comes to needing help. They won't reach out and have trouble receiving. They are in denial of their vulnerability and need for love and intimacy.

- Problems with intimacy. By this I'm not referring to sex, although sexual dysfunction often is a reflection of an intimacy problem. I'm talking about being open and close with someone in an intimate relationship. Because of the shame and weak boundaries, you might fear that you'll be judged, rejected, or left. On the other hand, you may fear being smothered in a relationship and losing your autonomy. You might deny your need for closeness and feel that your partner wants too much of your time; your partner complains that you're unavailable, but he or she is denying his or her need for separateness.

- Painful emotions. Codependency creates stress and leads to painful emotions. Shame and low self-esteem create anxiety and fear about being judged, rejected or abandoned; making mistakes; being a failure; feeling trapped by being close or being alone. The other symptoms lead to feelings of anger

and resentment, depression, hopelessness, and despair. When the feelings are too much, you can feel numb.

Codependents excessively worry or are preoccupied with a problem or person. They can also be obsessed with and controlling of the people and problems in their environment, emotionally dependent on the people around them and act as caretakers (rescuers, enablers). In rescuing they seek to take care of people who are capable of taking care of themselves. Rescuing such people from their responsibilities doesn't help them to grow; it enables them to continue to shirk the consequences of their actions.

The games that people play to conceal their true self are also interesting to note. Following are a few examples:

## **All Heart**

All heart people are likely to be excessively tender to pets, overindulgent with children, excessively demonstrative in showing affection and tenderness. They follow their heart in all matters and the head is not involved at all. They lack any boundaries and suppress any hostile inclinations.

## **Always Right**

These people do not listen well and never lose an argument even if the evidence is stacked against them. They are deeply insecure about themselves.

## **Physical Vanity (The Body Beautiful)**

These are the people that are so engrossed in their physical appearance, one wonders if they can come to know the difference between who they are and

how they look. Their sense of self is based upon their physical appearance. They love to stand in front of the mirror and admire themselves or spend an inordinate amount of time at the gym sculpting their bodies. One wonders whether these people spend any time at all cultivating their spiritual life.

### **The Clown**

People that are always clowning around are trying to draw attention to themselves and oftentimes take nothing seriously. It's a means of escape from reality.

### **The Conformist**

The conformist doesn't want to rock the boat and seeks peace at any price. They repress their emotions in order to go along with the crowd. It's the herd mentality, if everyone does it must be right.

## **Deluded by Grandeur**

These people have a mistaken sense of self. They love to drop names to show that they hang with an important crowd. Who they know somehow determines who they are. They are grandstanders looking for attention.

## **The Dreamer**

Dreamers live in their head and not in the real world. They are superheroes in their own mind. They often like movies and stories because these outlets provide more information for the imagination to use for future flights of fancy.

## **The Flirt**

The flirt looks to get some recognition to stroke the ego. Those that play this game have never cultivated any real emotional depth. The flirt avoids

any deeper relationships because those would promote better self-knowledge and self-acceptance. Flirting is possible only when emotions are trivial and superficial, though the flirt will not admit this about his/her emotional state. Flirts have been somehow fixated in an adolescent, self-centered state, and their growth has been arrested.

### **The Gossip**

The people who play the gossip game are intent on tearing the other person down in order to elevate their own self-esteem. It is a way to stroke their ego. It is much easier to tear down others than to lift one's self up by achievement. Those that gossip have very shallow sense of self and take delight in other peoples scandalous behavior. They feel better about themselves by identifying all the character flaws of other people.

## **The Messiah**

The messiah has a deep seated need to feel important and wanted. They see themselves as the “helper” and oftentimes become an enabler. Not allowing people to use their own strength and talents, the messiah does it all for them.

## **The Pouter**

The pouting game is played by emotional children who cannot openly discuss interpersonal problems because their grievance is irrational and they know it. They can scourge others emotionally by their silence, sad looks etc. They can sulk without having to explain why they are acting that way.



## Summary

So we see that God is a person and our first priority is to establish and maintain a right relationship with Him. From this right relationship, all other human interpersonal relationships will flow properly.

Human nature is fallen, which is evidenced by the fact that our subconscious mind works in many instances to distort reality so that it conforms itself to our subjective and self-absorbed view of ourselves and the world.

We must examine our “Map” and continually change it so it is in conformity with reality. This process is called conversion.

The Church has a saying that grace builds on nature. The supernatural order is built on the natural order.

Those that want to advance in the spiritual life must recognize that they need to address their natural weaknesses and faulty dispositions to create a sound platform by which grace can build. Those that rush into the spiritual life without edifying the natural order are building their house on sand.

Piety has its place, but don't dismiss the natural order otherwise the piety lacks substance and can scandalize those that are seekers of the truth.