

Generally, Better Together (GBT)

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Introduction

In 1979, to celebrate my “mid-life crisis” 40th birthday - deemed in Opus Dei as special, I was sent on my Annual Course to San Sebastian. There, with plenty of spare-time, I started writing what forty years later ended up as a compendium of my life’s philosophy: “Life Squared; a handbook for life in an accelerating world.”

In order to be able to teach the ‘A level’ Johannine corpus at the Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School - and, since the 1973 event in Orme Court, suspicious of the instructions I had been receiving in Opus Dei - I needed to discover what I really meant by the words God, eternity, sin, salvation, love, humanity and life. What did I think – what was my own perception - of life’s SONG: my Self, Others, Nature and God?

Gradually, as I pondered and wrote, I realised that the Universe was not a machine but more like an organism constantly created by The Father, steered by The Son and enlivened – loved by - *Qedosh Ruah*, The Holy (feminine) Spirit.

Thanks to our Covid lockdowns in 2021, I was able to finish and publish “Life Squared”. As I wrote it, out of the shadows rumbled a train of thought that reached the end of the line: the conviction that at their core many of the world’s problems in philosophy, theology, politics, cultures and life itself are due to disjunctives. To heal the world, we need conjunctives: “and, both, also, as well as”. Better, together they enrich life. Disjunctives fragment. Conjunctives unify.

The motto of Clapham College, my *alma mater*, now no longer there, was “*Concordia Res Parvae Crescunt*” (In harmony, small things grow).

“Better Together” was the principal campaign slogan for a No vote in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, advocating Scotland continuing to be part of the United Kingdom. It worked.

Unitate fortior (Stronger by union) is the motto of the Army & Navy Club, London SW1Y

5JN. And, of course, The Musketeers’ “All for one. One for all.”

Brexit has made it all too palpably clear that ‘going it alone’ has had – and will continue to have - massive negative impact on the UK’s fiscal life and much else.

The Physical, Intellectual, Emotional and Spiritual components of our human life, The PIES, inseparable in reality, can be viewed and evaluated individually. In my role as a spiritual guide and monitoring character development, I have found this acronym structure useful.

Instead of the traditional body, mind and spirit, I prefer the PIES. Why?

Because, on the one hand, we are made to the image and likeness of God (Gen1, 27) who, not having a mind, certainly has a magnificent intelligence as can be seen in the remarkably directed evolution of the universe these past 13.7 billion years.

And on the other, I include the emotional because it is our emotions that - typically - motivate most of our decisions and actions, which we then justify with our intellect.

In this book, to give my trains of thought clear destinations, I have structured my ideas around the framework of these PIES. The structure is not perfect. Some couplets are from different compartments of PIES.

e.g.

1. Select a target (I) AND obtain motivation (E).

Tougher the goal, greater must be the motivation.

Longer it takes to reach the objective, the more enduring must the motivation be.

2. Have ambition (I) AND yet be realistic (S).

Wise to cut one's coat according to one's cloth.

Make plans and decisions that are based on what you have not what you would like. Given my height, it would have been foolish for me to aim to be an elite basketball player.

3. Tap into your potential or ability (PIES) AND develop and use your self-discipline (S): the ability to push yourself forward, stay motivated, and act, regardless of how you are feeling, physically or emotionally. Lacking self-discipline, all too many people end up with a great future behind them. You need effort and endurance to convert dreams into palpable reality.

4. Having enough work (P & I) AND enough time for family life (E), is vital for a healthy emotional balance.

5. When people and institutions have BOTH wealth and generosity great things can be achieved. However, to avoid doing damage, they also need wisdom: tapping into the advice of experts who know the facts. (So much harm has been done by well-wishing well diggers in Africa. Women, no longer needing to walk distances, had time and energy to swell the population which ended up causing poverty, conflict or migration.)

6. A serious drive AND ability can convert dreams into reality, no matter how challenging these may be.

I am on earth alive in a body thanks to my spirit. Without my body, I would not be here. When God decides to take away my spirit, I will be dead on earth, alive in God beyond Space-Time. On earth, BOTH body AND spirit are essential for life.

To the title of this book, I added the adjective 'generally', as there are exceptions. I have heard – alas, all too often, "I married him/her for life. Not for the impossible."

Then, of course, being together can be one-sided, asymmetrical – as the Indian army in Flanders, 1915, found out. Good for Britain, not so good for all those soldiers from her vast colony.

You will, probably, have come across the phrase, "united we stand, divided we fall", a saying attributed to the storyteller Aesop (620-564BCE), both directly in his fable "The Four Oxen and the Lion"¹ and indirectly in "The Bundle of Sticks". Its truth, as taught by Jesus, "if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand" (Mk 3, 25), is still valid. Hence this book.

In my later years, I try to be BOTH an optimist AND a realist. As Oscar Wilde would have put it, "we may all be in the gutter, but I am looking at the stars." Rather than competing with more gifted folk, I prefer aiming to achieve the best I can with what I have: pushing my PB - my Personal Best - ever upwards.

Our individualistic, materialistic, secular culture is decadence vectoring itself to self-destruction. I hope this book, if read by teachers at any level, will help achieve a more united, peaceful and flourishing future for our planet.

Physical

Good buildings AND green spaces together work better for healthy communities. Green spaces improve air quality, reduce noise and enhance biodiversity. They also moderate temperatures during hot periods and provide cool and shaded areas, as well as play zones for children and dogs.

Local communities use green space for physical exercise – typically tennis – AS WELL AS social interactions and relaxation. Exposure to green space benefits health by reducing mortality and

morbidity from chronic diseases, improving mental health, pregnancy outcomes and reducing obesity.

“We”, as a team of individuals each expert in their field, is better than an “I” trying to be a jack-of-all-trades, master of none.

A team, of even just two, can often perform far better than a solitary individual can. Think carrying a ladder, hanging a picture, erecting scaffolding...

Together with another human, life can be far better fun. Think hitting a tennis ball or kicking a football. Think enjoying a meal or drinking alcohol. A fellow cleric admitted to me that he had bought a dog so he would not have to take his inevitable – he said - night-time tipples alone. Better together – even with a dog.

Think looking AND listening when crossing a road.

We need sounds to hear AND silence to enable us to reflect on what is said or played.

With any medical problem, it is good to treat the symptoms AND ascertain the case(s).

People feeling depressed have low serotonin levels in their brains. - and this can be treated, with at least short-term improvements in moods with serotonin supplements.

However, the causes of their depression will be a mix of bad biological, psychological and social experiences. Perhaps a lack of sunlight, griefs - emotions associated with loss of someone - even 'just' a pet - beloved. Some depressions stem from - almost initially subconscious - memories of childhood traumas. These may have been physical, emotional or sexual abuse - maybe a mix of these.

The aetiology of grief - the emotion associated with loss - can be caused by any loss of what has for us value. Depression – anxiety - is caused by – probably sub-conscious - child-trauma, grief, the loss of job, status, finance, values, looks, fitness, job-satisfaction, meaning, control and love. Loneliness.

When my role as Diocesan Chaplain to Young People (more than just 'Youth.' The included anyone up to the age of 25) was taken away, I felt depressed. However, thanks to prayer - and I suspect my wartime 'never let the buggers get you down' temperament, I soon saw it as an opportunity. A door had opened. I could get involved with sport.

Sure enough, soon The Cardinal appointed me, the first ever in the UK, Chaplain to Sport. As a result, I became involved with - and hugely enjoyed - the London 2012 Games. Thanks to my energies dedicated to sport. I was awarded the honour of being appointed Visiting Professor at St Mary's University, Twickenham. As we know, flowers blossom fine in deep manure. So, if you find yourself in some of that, see what seeds you can sow. Remember, the Resurrection came as a result of the Crucifixion.

In WW2 the us bombers flew together in tight formation as this gave them enhanced defence against the Nazi fighters.

Fighters tended, whenever possible, to fly with a wingman for the same reason.

In WW2 on the Eastern Front, it was better to have the inexhaustible source of Russian soldiers and the vast quantity of trucks, jeeps, tanks and much more supplied by the USA. TOGETHER these vanquished the Nazi Wehrmacht (meaning “defence power. Given its hideous aggression, a grim oxymoronic title for that army.)

Battle of Waterloo (18 June 1815) was won by the armies of the Duke of Wellington- who prayed “give me night or give me Blücher” - AND his Prussian ally General Gebhard Blücher. The arrival of the Prussians and their attack on the right, changed everything.

The Supermarine Spitfire, which first flew in March 1935, a heroic icon of WW2, needed BOTH the inventor of the airframe, Reginald J Mitchall (1895-1937), AND the brilliant Rolls Royce, water-cooled, Merlin engine, if it was to perform as well as it did.

(In case you wondered, The Spitfire was named after Ann, the daughter of the manufacturer's chairman, Sir Robert McLean, who called her "the little spitfire".)

In WW2, it was Churchill AND Stalin AND the USA TOGETHER beat Hitler. UK AND USA AND Canada succeeded on D Day.

Currently – October 2022 – it is Ukranian courage AND USA and UK supplied arms that are forcing Russia to retreat.

To produce a top racehorse, its owner(s) need BOTH a top stud AND top trainer. Then, to win top races, they need that horse AND a top jockey.

For safe driving, a car needs an accelerator AND a brake.

Think Schizophrenia, a mental disorder involving a fragmentation of the relationships between thought, emotion, and behaviour. Working TOGETHER, these are fine. Disconnected, fragmented, they are grim.

Erotic desire is both good, even sacramental, AND dangerous, with its ability to damage and even destroy individuals and families.

We need wakefulness full of creativity AND sleep to help brain recover and minimise risk of dementia. Harvard researchers found that individuals who slept fewer than five hours per night were twice as likely to develop dementia, and twice as likely to die early, compared to those who slept six to eight hours per night. This study controlled for demographic characteristics including age, marital status, race, education, health conditions, and body weight.

Researchers in Europe (including France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Finland) examined data from almost 8,000 participants from a different study and found that consistently sleeping six hours or less at age 50, 60, and 70 was associated with a 30% increase in dementia risk compared to a normal sleep duration of seven hours.

It is good to drink BOTH coffee AND tea in appropriate quantities.

Coffee is a potent source of healthful antioxidants, it provides a short-term memory boost and – together with vitamin D, exercise and plenty of sleep - helps protect against dementia.

Coffee is healthy for your heart, and it may help curb certain cancers, as well as lessen your risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Coffee consumption has been linked to a lower incidence of cirrhosis, especially alcoholic cirrhosis. It also guards against gout.

Coffee curbs depression.

Coffee is cool.

However, there are a few cons of coffee drinking.

For some people, coffee in high doses, can cause irritability, nervousness or anxiety and it can also impact sleep quality and cause insomnia. In people with hypertension, coffee consumption does transiently raise their blood pressure, although for no more than several hours, but no correlation has been found between coffee drinking and long-term increases in blood pressure or the incidence of cardiovascular disease in patients with pre-existing hypertension.

It takes about six hours for the effects of caffeine to wear off, so limit coffee drinking to early in the day.

On the other hand, tea also has its benefits.

Benefits of tea drinking.

Tea contains antioxidants that prevent the body's version of rust and thus help to keep us young and protect us from damage from pollution.

Tea contains less caffeine than coffee. Herbal tea blends have no caffeine and traditional teas have less than 50 percent of what typically is found in coffee.

Tea may reduce your risk of heart attack and stroke, it may help with weight loss and protect your bones.

Tea may keep your smile bright. Japanese researchers have found that tea can decrease tooth loss because it changes the pH in your mouth when you drink it and that may be what prevents cavities. Tea does not appear to erode tooth enamel.

Tea may boost the immune system and help battle cancer.

Herbal tea may soothe the digestive system.

Pure tea is calorie free.

So, enjoy that cuppa. However, remember that experts recommend that you should drink four cups of tea a day to be of optimal benefit to your health.

The title the February 2023 International Casinos Exhibition (ICE) was Stronger Together.

Folk with gambling problems need support from their peers. Gambling Anonymous, like Alcoholics Anonymous, knows that what people alone cannot achieve, together with others, they can. And do.

Depending on how we observe it, energy - light - has a dual nature. It seems to act as both a particle AND a wave.

Nature and nurture are ubiquitous. The Cosmos, whose nature, conceived at the Big Bang (some 13.7 billion years ago) has needed the divine nurture – directed evolution – to arrive where we now are.

Farming in most of its forms benefits from having plenty of sunshine AND rain; plenty of winter AND spring rain, plenty of sunshine in summer AND autumn.

Fitness is a result of not just proper training BUT ALSO correct diet AND positive mind-set. Sporting success is a child of both ambition AND humility – some would call that realism.

There are able-bodied sports AND there are Paraspports - sports played by people with a disability, including physical and intellectual disabilities. Experience has shown how able AND disabled sportspeople find each other mutually enriching.

Paralympic history began in 1948 at a hospital for war veterans in Stoke Mandeville, located 60 kilometres north of London. Since his appointment in 1944, German neurologist Sir Ludwig Guttmann - Jewish doctor who fled Nazi Germany just before the start of the Second World War - had been looking for a way to help his paraplegic patients, all World War II veterans, rehabilitate more quickly.

In parallel with the London Olympics 1948, he gave birth to The Stoke Mandeville Games. These Stoke Mandeville Games, in 1960 Rome, became the Paralympic Games; featuring 400 athletes from 23 countries.

Since then – in tandem with the Olympics - they have taken place every four years. (564 athletes from 46 nations took part in the Beijing 2022 Paralympics, 4 March 2022 – 13 March 2022.)

Able-bodied athletes are now taking part in para-sports, which is helping bring the two types of athletes together, the able-bodied athlete finding out what it means to live with a disability.

Now there is both male AND female professional elite footy on TV. Women's association football is played at the professional level in multiple countries throughout the world and 176 national teams participate internationally.

Although the "first golden age" of women's football occurred in the United Kingdom in the 1920s, with one match attracting over 50,000 spectators, The Football Association initiated a ban in 1921 in England that disallowed women's football games from taking place on the grounds used by its member clubs. That ban remained in effect until July 1971.

In 1972, the first official women's international in Britain was played at Greenock. England beat Scotland 3-2.

Until 1933, collaboration was a clean word. (A bit like my father's name when in 1909 he was baptised Adolf). Once again, for the younger generations, it is no longer a dirty word though in the context of World War II, the term "collaborators" applied to those who aided the Nazi.

The prefix col - is a variant of com-, meaning "together." At the heart of the word is labour, meaning "work." Competitors in any sport need not be enemies if they return to the origin of that word, "*com – petito*": to strive together.

Many clubs – in all sorts of sports - are exploring ways to collaborate with organisations, communities, and local clubs to develop and facilitate inclusive health and wellbeing opportunities. TOGETHER they can make their communities better.

Liverpool FC currently provide a range of youth sessions a week from a young ambassador program, IT workshops, yoga, to supporting local organizations such as Army Cadets and the Jamie Carragher Academy.

Arsenal Football Club has always had community at its heart and celebrated 100 years in the Borough of Islington during 2013/14.

As well as its charitable endeavours, The Arsenal Foundation supports an array of good causes in the community, providing practical and financial support to a number of initiatives in the local boroughs of Islington, Camden, Westminster and Hackney.

Head of Arsenal in the Community, Freddie Hudson, is one of two loyal Arsenal staff members to be named a Premier League Community Captain in recognition of his outstanding contribution to our local area.

Queens Park Rangers (QPR) have a vision: "To create a stronger, healthier, more active community where everyone can thrive". Their Mission? "To address local needs AND make a difference to individuals and our communities." Their Core Values? "Driven by local needs by partners, funders and stakeholders. To be positive role models promoting positive change." QPR Football Club and QPR Trust cares about its local community. It is empathetic, supportive, professional and passionate.

On earth, time is not only a threat – we might die any minute – BUT ALSO an opportunity to develop and grow.

I am both mortal AND immortal. My body is due to die. However, I am alive in eternity now AND will be there, with God, after my body has died.

My death will, I suspect, be BOTH negative (for my friends), AND excellent for me, enabling me finally to be born into divine eternity and see the face of God.

Intellectual

Though it is fair to say that reality may be one, perceptions – understanding any part of that reality – are contingent on the standpoint, education, culture and intelligence of the observer.

To get a handle on reality we need to look AND see, to listen AND to hear. Yesterday, this was brought home to me as I visited a family. Seeing the lady of the house sorting out her daughter's laundry, I joked, "Typical, getting her mum to do the work." "Actually, she is clearing up after last night's party at the parish hall." I had made my comment before I had got the full picture. Easily done. In this case, without causing harm or pain. I am never too old to learn.

"2 + 2?" "Are we buying or selling?"

Remember that we each have three brains. The "head" or cephalic brain, the heart (cardiac) AND a gut (enteric) brain. With age, I have learned that to get the best possible take on reality it is wise to listen to all of our three brains: the head, the heart, and the gut.

The cephalic brain has two hemispheres; one of which tends to be dominant though BOTH TOGETHER do a better job.

The right brain is creative, intuitive, artistic, non-verbal, emotional, musical, and imaginative AND left-brain is logical, analytical, linear, factual, verbal, and sequential.

Our second brain is located not in our head but in our tummy, or to be more specific, in our digestive system which operates independent of our head brain. As they say, "trust your gut feeling!"

The third is in our heart. Being aware of and listening to all three, in wise.

To excel, we need to use BOTH of our brain hemispheres. The two hemispheres are – like the right and left ventricles of the heart – equally important.

Left-brain people are more organized and systematic. Right-brain people are more creative and intuitive.

Functions of the left side of the brain are analytical, logic, and computation skills. The right side of your brain is in charge of visual awareness, imagination, emotions, spatial abilities, face recognition, music awareness, 3D forms, interpreting social cues, and left-hand control.

Left-brain functions are deemed to include understanding the sum of any situation - getting "the big picture", large muscle movements like walking, sensing where one's body is in space, balance, nonverbal communication, emotional functioning, sensing smells, sounds and taste as well as regulating avoidance behaviours.

According to neuroscience research, the left side of the brain is positively stimulated by new experiences. It controls the immune system and is responsible for the involuntary bodily functions, like breathing, heart rate, and digestion.

Left-brain and right-brain psychology further describes left-brain functions as including: the ability to pay attention to details, fine motor movement skills, and the ability to convert sounds to language and translate their meaning. Left-brain networks also are thought to control analytical/logical thinking, including a person's mathematics ability and problem-solving skills.

The right brain hemisphere is thought to allow young children to understand concepts of more versus less. However, the understanding of specific number values involves the left hemisphere.

Other cognitive activities that tend to be governed by the right hemisphere of the brain include attention to, and processing the overall visual shape of items, understanding verbal ambiguity, and emotional and implied meanings.

In terms of brain development, neuroscience research indicates that until about 3 years of age, the right brain hemisphere tends to have the primary – dominant - role in brain function.

Together the left AND right – though they cannot prove much - can present evidence for discussions and debates.

RBH reads atmospheres, moods and situation. With their ambiguity, irony, metaphor, nuance and subtlety.

The LBH is great for rational intelligence.

However, our minds are plastic. Children who have lost an entire hemisphere are able to lead – only slightly impaired – normal lives.

The Chinese philosophical concept of yin AND yang, ("dark-light", "negative-positive"), describes how obviously opposite or contrary forces may actually be complementary, interconnected, and interdependent, and how they may give rise to each other as they interrelate to one another.

Yin is the receptive and Yang the active principle, seen in all forms of change and difference such as the annual cycle (winter and summer), the landscape (north-facing shade and south-facing brightness), sexual coupling (female and male), the formation of both men and women as characters and socio-political history (disorder and order).

Yin is a symbol of earth, femaleness, darkness, passivity, and absorption. It is present in even numbers, in valleys and streams, and is represented by the tiger, the colour orange, and a broken line.

Yang is conceived of as heaven, maleness, light, activity, and penetration. It is present in odd numbers, in mountains, and is represented by the dragon, the colour azure, and an unbroken line. In harmony, the two are depicted as the light and dark halves of a circle.

The term "dualistic-monism" or dialectical monism has been coined in an attempt to express this fruitful paradox of simultaneous unity AND duality. Yin and yang can be thought of as complementary - not opposing - forces that interact to form a dynamic system in which the whole is greater than its parts.

According to this philosophy, everything has both yin AND yang aspects (for instance, shadow cannot exist without light). Either of the two major aspects may manifest more strongly in a particular object, depending on the criterion of the observation. The yin yang symbol shows a balance between two opposites with a portion of the opposite element in each section.



When making a choice or deciding how to act now, it is wise to consider both the past AND the future to remember the consequences of past actions and avoid making the same mistakes again.

In 1959, while working in Argyll on a civil engineering project a ganger fell ill. I suggested to the manager that Bill, who had been working for the company the past 32 years, could take over. He answered, "Oh no. Bill does not have 32 years' experience. He has had one year's experience 32 times." I realised Bill had learned nothing – and kept making the same mistakes each year. That conversation has stayed with me ever since.

Natural to see the world in terms of "us" and "them". For millennia, tribes were welded into unity by fighting the enemy, the other. No wonder races see other races as threatening. Deep down in our reptilian brain we are racists. Good to admit and compensate for that centrifugal, xenophobic instinct.

In his Good Samaritan parable (Lk 10, 29-37), Jesus made patently clear that in the Kingdom of God there is no 'us' and 'them' but a global 'we'. We are all in it together, in one divine family. Not easy, but so life enriching when we manage to see and embrace this reality.

For me, men and women – both made to the image and likeness of God (Gen 1, 27) are radically equal and clearly different. Thank God. Otherwise, how would there be the next generation?

In the Kingdom of God, which Jesus Christ came to inaugurate, teach and live, there is equality of all. St Paul caught this clearly in his letter to the Galatians (3, 28), "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

To make sense of life we need to consider BOTH the present AND remember the past.

To make sense of what is said, or written, we need words AND take care of punctuation. The classic: "A woman, without her, man is a savage." "A woman without her man, is a savage." May both be true.

Top people are both serious thinkers AND have a sense of humour. Laughter is a personal serious medicine AND a powerful communal glue. It is also a non-violent weapon of resistance to tyranny, sustaining hope.

Science AND faith, like yin and yang, are complementary. Science studies the parts to see how they work. Faith unites the parts to see what together they mean. The left side brain, being analytical and linear, deals with science: investigating and explaining what and how things are. The right - holistic and integrative - side is interested in relationships, meaning: The why? Moreover, by whom? God.

If reality is like a tube, Science looks at it laterally, sideways – and sees a rectangle with its what? How? When? Faith looks at it longitudinally, frontally – and sees a circle with its why? By whom? The rectangle and circle do not clash. They enable us to perceive reality – call it 'truth'- more accurately, more completely.

To understand life, we need both faith AND science. In fact, science needs perception-faith to accept the existence of the unseen cause of a palpable fact. Things fall. Scientists accept there must be gravity.

Though molecules were always there, that fact was discovered only in 1926, by the French physicist Jean Perrin, who received the Nobel Prize in physics for proving, conclusively, the existence of molecules.

Dark matter AND dark energy are names for phenomena we cannot see yet believe must be there because there is more gravitation than our theories predict. The first real evidence for dark matter came in 1933. Scientists became convinced – they believed – that there must be a source of

gravitation we cannot see. The only source of gravitation we know is matter. What we cannot see appears dark to us. Therefore, we call it dark matter.

The universe is expanding faster than our theories predict. Thus, scientists believe that there must be an invisible force that does that. The only source of force we know is energy. Discovered in 1998, we don't know what dark energy is and therefore we call it dark energy.

Many years ago, as I studied the human brain, and then much later the DNA, I realised - I became convinced – that there must be a magnificent intelligence shaping that brain which had been evolving for billions of years. There had to be a creator God.

It is good to have a strong personal faith AND respect the faiths of others. Reality is one. Perceptions are personal and affected by intelligence, education and culture. Belonging shapes believing, with its values, and that in turn influences our behaviour – with its virtues and, alas, vices.

Intellectual Intelligence (II) AND Emotional Intelligence (EI) AND Spiritual Intelligence (SI), are better together.

Mensa measures II and a person's IQ. EI is the ability to control your own emotions and understand those of others. SI is the ability to access deeper meanings, values, purposes and your own unconscious; maybe even that of others.

It seems to me that there are many 'conceptual disjunctives' which can become conjunctives shaping a sharper, more truthful take on reality.

For example, Boris Johnson is BOTH (alas!) a great Brexiteer AND a disastrous human being. Brexit may have produced a greater political freedom BUT it ALSO caused a massive damage to our economy.

A group, a team of folk with different priorities and from different backgrounds, genders and dates-of-birth are likely to make sounder political and fiscal decisions than a solitary person working alone.

Remember "The blind men AND an elephant" parable? A group of blind men heard that an elephant had been brought to the town, but none of them was aware of its shape and form. Out of curiosity, they said: "We must inspect and know it by touch, of which we are capable".

Therefore, they sought it out and they groped about it.

The first person, whose hand landed on the trunk, said, "This being is like a thick snake".

For another one whose hand reached its ear, it seemed like a kind of fan.

For another, whose hand was upon its leg, said, the elephant is a pillar like a tree-trunk.

The one who placed his hand upon its side said the elephant "is a wall".

Another who felt its tail described it as a rope.

The last felt its tusk, and said the elephant is like a spear.

In some versions, the blind men then discover their disagreements, suspect the others to be not telling the truth and come to blows.

The moral of the story is that humans tend to claim absolute truth based on their limited, subjective experience and to ignore other people's limited, subjective experiences that may be equally true.

My education has enabled me to enjoy life AND others to enjoy my company. Or so it seems.

Everyone can teach me something. Life has taught me that, like stopped clocks, even fools can be sometimes right.

“I see nobody on the road,” said Alice. “I only wish that I had such eyes,” the King remarked in a fretful tone. “To be able to see Nobody! And at that distance too! Why, it’s as much as I can do to see real people, by this light!” (Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass*)

Open dialogue, even polylogue, where all those involved are open to the ideas of others, is intellectually mutually enriching. That type of dialogue is a communication tool that allows people to understand other viewpoints without pitting themselves against different perspectives. In this dialogue, there is no defending of opinions, and no counterpoints. Instead, you let someone talk and present their viewpoint. Dialogue and polylogue – as in the Three Faiths Forum or Canary Wharf Multi-Faith Chaplaincy,

Though beliefs are myriad, the behaviour of people of different faiths, at their best, can be very similar. Though for Shintoists, mainly some five million, in Japan, there are many gods or spirits, the main values of Shinto are similar to those of The Kingdom of God preached by Jesus Christ: purity, harmony, respect for nature, family respect, and subordination of the individual before the group. Shinto emphasises duty as its main motivator. Jesus emphasises love.

God is God (Exod 3, 14). Jews, Christians and Muslims can dialogue – even triologue - their own take on this one creator God.

Dialogue and triologue,

1. Build trust. Without this vital ingredient, teams don’t work, leaders lack traction and projects fail. The quickest way to build trust is through being willing to talk about what matters most and encouraging others to do the same.
2. Inspire new ideas. People share their best thinking, work hardest and come up with their freshest ideas when they are engaged. The wealth of untapped intelligence in organisations can be best accessed by listening to people and helping them listen to each other.
3. Cultivate collaboration. Without good dialogue, problems remain unresolved and “silo working” sets in. Good communication is at the heart of productive teamwork, successful projects and effective leadership. People who talk together create together.
4. Improve relationships. We deepen our connections with people by talking openly and honestly. When we look beyond our own self-interested perspective and try to see others’ points of view, we build bridges with them.
5. Resolve conflict. Difficult feelings – resentment, frustration or disappointment – often fester if we don’t communicate them. A good conversation helps to clear the air and make space for something new, whether it’s a restored relationship, a gracious goodbye or an agreement to disagree.
6. Encourage creativity. To produce quality goods and services, we need the spark of new ideas which often emerge from the creative tension between different points of view. In a team, everyone holds a piece of the puzzle. The only way to complete the jigsaw is by finding a way to talk together.
7. Increase wellbeing. Research shows that people who have substantive conversations are happier than those who just do small talk. When we have time to reflect with each other, we feel more fulfilled in our work and wider lives.
8. Create more meaning. Younger people entering the workforce (“millennials”) don’t just want to make money. They want high impact work and to feel that they can shape their destiny. Employees who are inspired by meaningful dialogue are more likely to stay with their organisation than move on.

9. Open doors. Finding the courage to speak out creates new opportunities. A conversation could lead to a pay rise, a promotion or an unexpected perk. Sometimes the next chapter doesn't start until the threshold of talking together is crossed.

10. Expand flexibility. Being skilful at dialogue makes us more agile. We are better able to understand others, see the bigger picture and come up with solutions that we might never have reached by working alone.

When planning any activity, it is wise to consider BOTH now AND then. Consequences of our actions should help shape our morality AND strategy. If Hitler had thought of the condition in which he would find the Baku oilfields (which had fuelled his 1939 Blitzkrieg) AND the Russian winter temperatures, he would not have launched Operation Barbarossa on Sunday, 22 June 1941. He imagined it would be over before the Russian winter set in.

Had Hitler imagined Stalin's ruthless use of his vast soviet population as cannon fodder AND remembered how the Russian winter had decimated Napoleon's troops, he would have desisted from attacking Stalingrad, just to humiliate its eponym.

History shows that to progress, humanity needs to continue to not only look and discover BUT ALSO to think, imagine and invent.

An inventor AND a business brain - working together - are more likely to succeed than a brilliant inventor on his or her ever is.

To succeed as an entrepreneur, you need not only invention but also production. Samuel Colt, an inventor, needed Eli Whitney Jr., an engineer-businessman, successfully to set up The Colt Armoury in 1855 at Hartford, Connecticut: the world's first mass production assembly line factory - a model picked up and developed by that friend of Hitler's, Henry Ford.

For success, F1 and indeed F2, F3 cars need BOTH a great car AND a great driver AS WELL AS an intelligent, experienced and committed management team.

For great humour, we needed a Morecombe AND a Wise, a Laurel AND a Hardy.

To thrive, a half-decent country needs BOTH independent legislative, juridical and executive branches of government, AND ALSO a free press.

In a country, there is the state AND there is its civil society: with its families, communities, charities, philanthropic associations, religious congregations, neighbourhood groups and the like. When discussing politics, it is wise to bear BOTH in mind.

In law it is better to have BOTH legal AND restorative justice. When I was looking after St Patrick's parish, Wapping (2014-15), a young man who had been arrested for stealing a car, burst into tears when its owner, a mother of a three-year-old boy, told him that her son had not slept for weeks because in that car he had lost his teddy-bear.

A man who had been a burglar for twenty years suddenly stopped. He learnt a very tight restorative lesson. His own home had been burgled and – until then – he had never realised how painful to the victim that crime had felt.

September 2022, when visiting the University of North Carolina, Greensboro (UNCG) I was introduced to "Restorative Youth Sports: An Applied Model for Resolving Conflicts and Building Positive Relationships" in the department of Kinesiology.

Concentrating on helping young people become better, it resonates with the programs of John Paul 2 Foundation 4 Sport, with its aim of helping young people be better by acquiring virtues through sport - now embedded within SWIFT at St Mary's University, Twickenham.

There is legality AND there is morality. They are not the same. What may be legal may not be moral. What may be moral, like professing your faith, may not – in a tyranny or dictatorship – be legal. In a liberal culture, abortion may be legal but, to my Christian mind, it is not moral. For me, - and I hope for you, dear reader – morality trumps legality.

There is an inner-directed society AND another-directed one. The inner is steered by its belief. The outer by what others are doing. Whatever the cultural weather, remember, you are captain of your ship whose destination should be eternal life with God.

If social conformity were to become your only standard, concepts like duty, honour, obligation and responsibility could easily become irrelevant. Antique.

To be born, a great opera needs BOTH a great composer AND a great librettist. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was blessed with meeting Lorenzo Da Ponte, a Roman Catholic priest, who wrote the libretti of three of Mozart's most celebrated operas: *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte*.

To discover meaning it is essential to see AND to talk. If you see three people eating the same salad at a restaurant, you might wonder whether they are vegetarians, maybe trying to lose weight, or because of their religious dietary laws. Ask AND they might tell you.

Unless you ask questions AND hear answers, you can only guess what is going on in anyone's mind and heart.

Looking, seeing, talking AND hearing are vital for community cohesion. Hearing is simply the physical process of perceiving sound. Listening involves understanding what is being said. That may take time. It certainly calls for thought.

I accept that I am learned AND ignorant. I do not know what, both in quality and quantity, I do not know. The more I read and talk, the more I realise my ignorance. I know so little about nature with its trees, shrubs, flowers, butterflies – and so much more.

In any human head there are both reason AND intuition. We have BOTH a mind thinking AND heart AND gut feelings. Good to use them all.

Politicians like Hitler and the Japanese leadership in 1930-45 imagined, taught AND based their military strategy on the belief that their race was superior to that of the enemy. The error of these prejudices bloodied their face, in Russia at Stalingrad and Kursk and Iwo Jima and Okinawa in the Pacific. On December 7, 1941, at Pearl Harbour, the USA discovered that their low opinion of the Japanese - "Slitty-eyed, bucktooth, little people" - was somewhat inaccurate.

C of E has shown that women are as capable as men are in their hierarchical roles. C of E convert married clergy has evidenced that as RC priests they are no less committed than their celibate confreres. Why not have both celibate AND married men ordained? *Viri probati* - with years of experience working as laymen, could resonate with the Pauline description of priesthood there in his letter to Timothy (1 Tim 3, 1-7).

When making choices, the wise – the enlightened – bear in mind life both before AND after death, birth into, and then berth in, divine eternity.

The English language is both relatively rich AND at times for a foreigner, confusing. An advert that claims the product is "great on quality AND great on price" uses the word 'great' to mean on the one hand 'high' AND on the other 'low'.

Both Hebrew AND Greek philosophies have shaped Christianity's belief system.

In the Original Testament, people talk to, not about, God. Knowledge - *da'at* in Hebrew- is not so much about cognition as experience of another's intimacy: "David knew Bathsheba" (2 Samuel, 11, 4),

In the New Testament (Acts 17:18) we read about St Paul's discussions with Epicurean AND Stoic philosophers.

Christian assimilation of Hellenistic philosophy was anticipated by Philo (born 25BCE, in Alexandria, Egypt) AND other Greek-speaking Alexandrian Jews. Philo's blend of Judaism, Platonism, and Stoicism strongly influenced Christian Alexandrian writers such as Origen (born 185 CE) and Clement of Alexandria (born 150 CE, Athens—died between 211 and 215). Their views soon seeped into the Latin world.

According to the rationalist stream of Judaism articulated by Maimonides, which later came to dominate much of official traditional Jewish thought, God is understood as "the absolute one", indivisible and incomparable being who is the ultimate cause of all existence.

It was not until the fusion of Platonic and Aristotelian theology with Christianity that the concepts of strict omnipotence, omniscience and benevolence became commonplace. God was the infinite, unmoved mover. Since God was perfect, any change would make him less than perfect, so they asserted that God was unchanging, or immutable.

Anselm of Canterbury (1033/4 -1109), a priest, monk, and philosopher defined God as the "Being than which no greater can be conceived." Almost 200 years later, Thomas Aquinas, in his *Summa Theologiae*, article 3, wrote succinctly, "by 'God', however, we mean some infinite good".

Thanks to Jonathan Sacks (1948-2020) and his "The Great Partnership" I discovered that unbeknown to the author of Genesis, The Son's presence as director of evolution was and is there, at the end of the final sentence of Genesis 1:1 -2:3.

Jonathan writes. "(The Hebrew text) is precisely structured around the number seven, in ways not apparent in translation. The narrative speaks of creation in seven days. However, the text itself is precisely patterned on this number. Therefore, the word 'good' appears seven times. The word 'God' appears thirty-five times.

The words 'heaven' and 'earth' each appear twenty-one times. The word 'light' and 'day' occur seven times in the first paragraph. The first verse contains seven words, the second fourteen words. The paragraph describing the seventh day contains thirty-five words, and so on. The passage as a whole contains 67x7 words. The entire passage is constructed like a fractal, so that the sevenfold motif of the text as a whole is mirrored at lower levels of magnitude.

When a text is written in this way, apparently superfluous words become highly conspicuous. There is one obvious superfluous word: the last of the entire passage. The verse says, 'God sanctified the seventh day for on it he rested from all the work he had created' (2:3). The sentence should finish there. In fact, though, there is one extra word in the Hebrew, *la'asot*, which means 'to do, to make to function'.

Two classic commentators, Ibn Ezra and Abrabanel, interpret it to mean '(he has created it) in such a way that it would continue to create itself.'

Without stretching the text too far, we might say that *la'asot* means, quite simply, 'to evolve'."

To my engineer-trained mind, that evolution clearly has a director: The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

Scene. Flat, open terrain.

In the distance a dark spot is moving towards us.

As it comes close, it is clearly a row of more than one person.

As they pass by, they are three.

A man, a child and a mother.

That is how I image the Blessed Trinity.

Father, *actus essendi*, Abba, creating.

Son, *actus docendi*, The Word, Yeshua, teaching.

And then The Mother, Ruach, *actus amandi*, motivating.

The one God is a family, a community, inviting us to be like it is, diversity in a united life, each with their own role.

A weak, but my best, take on a mystery way beyond our ken.

In my trade as priest, I need to constantly repent, so as to change myself, AND I need to work on helping others to turn their own lives round.

Years ago, I came across The Serenity Prayer. Handy for anyone keen to help God. "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, AND wisdom to know the difference." (Written, probably, 1932/33, by the American Reinhold Niebuhr.)

For a successful surgical operation, we need competent surgeon AND anaesthetists AND nurses, as well as an efficient cleaning/sanitising team.

A film or play needs a Director AND cast AND producers, AS WELL AS that long list of people whose names appear on the credits.

Emotional

Antonio Damasio - a Portuguese American neuroscientist, currently the David Dornsife Chair in Neuroscience, as well as Professor of Psychology, Philosophy, and Neurology, at the University of Southern California, said in 'Descartes' error' – you can't make good decisions without consulting your emotions. 'Our feelings are often decisive in what we want and what we do, whether it is devising a scientific programme, buying a home or choosing a partner.'

Left brain is dominant for thinking, and the right brain is dominant for emotion.

I need BOTH friends, which include my family, AND allies-in-life; colleagues and associates.

A strong and healthy relationship of love, generated by a harmony of values, is built on the three As: Attention, Appreciation and Affection AND 3Cs: Communication, Compromise and Commitment. When backed up by equality, fidelity, gratitude and honesty – and each living to make the other's life a joy – marriage can indeed be mutually, enduringly, life enhancing.

Remember, both joy AND sorrow shared, unite. Bereaved? Cry AND get over it. Life is too short to waste it on moping. At times, life is BOTH beautiful AND sad. *C'est la vie*.

Sport spectators suffer, or is it enjoy, BOTH excitement AND nervousness. To be honest, and perhaps pathetic, I admit I feel nervous rather than excited when watching England play football, unless that is, they are at least two goals ahead.

In love there has to be a lover AND a beloved: the "I" AND the "you" generating a "we", as in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. I am inclined to believe that the Roman Church was

right to insert “*filioque*” (father and son) into the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. The Holy Spirit is the outcome of the Father’s AND the Son’s mutual love. Their ‘I’ and ‘You’ generating the Holy Spirit, the ‘we’.

As the song says, “You’re nobody unless somebody loves you”. To live life to the full, we all need someone who does love us. Underpinning love are two virtues. As water, whether it is a river, an ocean, steam or ice is always a compound of hydrogen and oxygen, love - whatever its intensity and texture - is underpinned by appreciation AND respect. ‘I love you; I need you - as you are – not as I might wish you to be.

We need to aim for respect AND appreciation (R&A) for self AND others AND nature if we claim to appreciate AND respect the giver of it all, the One we call God

We need to develop both sympathy AND empathy if we want to become an attractive human being.

Empathy is shown in how much compassion AND understanding we can give to another.

Sympathy is more of a feeling of pity for another. Empathy is our ability to understand how someone feels.

At work, as indeed in any part of society, there should be equality AND diversity AS WELL AS inclusion. At its core, equality means fairness: we must ensure that individuals, or groups of individuals, are not treated less favourably because of their characteristics.

Equality also means equality of opportunity. We must ensure that those who may be disadvantaged can get the tools they need to access the same, fair opportunities as their peers.

Diversity is recognising, respecting and celebrating each other's differences. A diverse environment is one with a wide range of backgrounds and mind-sets, which allows for an empowered culture of creativity AND innovation.

Inclusion allows a mix of people to come to work, feel comfortable and confident to be themselves, and work in a way that suits them and delivers what that business needs. Inclusion ensures that everyone feels valued, listened to and appreciated as adding value, value that is recognized by the organization.

Love, like the heart and lungs, needs both to receive AND to give. My vocation to serve others, nature and God was born when, for the first time aged 15, I palpably experienced God’s love.

One day on holiday in Eriskay (Outer Hebrides), August 1954, I decided to climb the hill, the highest point on Eriskay, passing on my way the skull and horns of a deceased sheep. At the top, I sat down, looked West across the Atlantic Ocean. Suddenly something utterly unexpected happened. The only way I can to put it is “I fell in love with infinity”. It was my Pentecostal Experience. I experienced the Divine Presence throughout my body.

I never asked for it, I never expected it. However, that moment — no idea how long it was before I climbed down that Benin Scathing peak of 185m — has stayed undiminished and fresh, glowing, solid still within my heart. Gradually, as the years went by, realised that that ‘Infinity’ was and is the One we tend to call ‘God’.

That experience altered my life 180 degrees. Instead of trying to be naughty so as to be accepted as ‘a part of the gang’ I started to study hard, to strive to be good AND going to Mass every day before school.

Altruism, like a reciprocating engine, realises the joy that the more you give across the PIES, the more you receive, at least in your E and S.

Love is BOTH a noun, “You are my love” AND a verb, “I love you.”

I need to love myself as I am AS WELL AS aiming to improve my PB (Persona Best), transcending my current state by becoming the best version of myself across my PIES.

The various expressions of love, each have their own balance of R & A.

Traditionally these forms of love have been identified in seven ways. There is.

1. *Agapē*, the unconditional and enduring love of God for humans, as well as our reciprocal love for God, is the highest form of love and is contrasted with *eros*, or erotic love, and *philia*, or brotherly love. A sub-section of this is at times referred to as *Pragma*, a love built on commitment, understanding and long-term interests, like building a family.

2. *Storge*, love of parents for children. It is often described as the most natural of loves.

3. *Philia*, love without romantic attraction occurs between friends or family members. It occurs when both people share the same values and respect each other. It is commonly referred to as “brotherly love”. Colleagues can become allies-in-life and, if they share your

values, interests and objectives, some may end up as authentic friends; “alter egos”.

4. *Ludus*, “game” or “school” in Latin, is a light-hearted, flirtatious love that wants to have fun with each other, to tease, and play harmless pranks on each other. *Ludus* is child-like and commonly found in the early stages of a relationship.

5. *Eros* is erotic, sexual, or passionate love. It is often all about need and it is more about the person who is feeling sexually aroused than it is about the person who is the focus of that love. (With a high “A” rating and a low “R”.)

6. *Philautia* is self-love. Though all too often sneered at as egocentric, it is vital if we are to “love our neighbour as our self” (Mt 22, 39) and live the universally approved Golden Rule expressed in the Gospel as, “Treat others as you would like them to treat you.” (Mt 7,12)

7. *Mania* is an obsessive love style likely to do something crazy, such as stalking. The movie ‘Fatal Attraction’ focused on this type of love.

I am both God’s lover AND His beloved. Lover because beloved. Therefore, alive in my right brain, I move into action through the left. I know I am here to help God heal the world.

In 1982, Harvard’s Carol Gilligan in her book “In a Different Voice” set out her convictions that men and women use different styles of moral reasoning. Women, she said, found their identity by attachment, men by separation. Women are more likely to feel threatened by isolation, men by intimacy.

Hence, in long-lasting relationships problems of emotional claustrophobia and agoraphobia raise their heads. Faced with a moral dilemma, men are more likely to analyse situations in terms of rights, women in terms of responsibilities.

In real life, some people – and I include myself in this cohort – are hybrids: accepting BOTH rights AND responsibilities.

Music, which directly affects the way we feel, is like love, both sound AND silence.

It is good to feel BOTH love of the good AND anger at the bad. Anger as Jesus showed when symbolically clearing out the Temple (Mt 21, 12-17; Jn 2, 13-22) was a powerful motivator.

Interesting, that in the Gospels, the only object Jesus is described as making was a whip (Jn 2, 15).

Maybe it is due to my early years under the Nazis that I hate bullies. I cannot stand bullying, as some tough lads, even Sixth Formers, found out while I was Head of RE and Chaplain at Cardinal Vaughan

Memorial School (1973-85). Whenever I became aware of a touch of bullying, I would approach the bully and offer to shake hands.

Thanks to my rowing - and lots of DIY – my grip would tighten until the bully's knees started to buckle. "Don't ever do that again. You are worth much more than a bully." No violence. No child protection issues. "Your honour, I was just shaking hands." No bones were ever broken. Though the numbness wore off, the memories, it seemed, endured.

Emotions have very broad spectrums on temperature, intensity AND depth. Beyond their infra-red area lurks passion and lust, capable of anaesthetising the intellectual and even knocking out ambition in the spiritual so as to delight in sex.

To avoid that self-destruction, we need a positive and attractive motive AS WELL AS self-discipline.

As long as we know which is which, fact AND fiction TOGETHER enrich lives. Myths have the power to inspire and motivate. I remember how moved I was by films such as High Noon, Casablanca, The Cruel Sea and Lawrence of Arabia.

Spiritual

God is love and thus respects AND appreciates everything AND everyone. That appreciation guides evolution. Respect prevents God tinkering with creation and thus God has to allow what we call natural disasters AS WELL AS the evil deeds of mankind.

To hear what God is saying to us, we need Sacred Scripture AND tradition. To fulfil our vocation, we need prayer, planning AND providence.

It is good to be BOTH grateful for what we have AND ask for help with what we need.

It is best to say both sorry for past mistakes AND repent to use them as a rehearsal for the future.

Not surprisingly, over the more than my eight decades on this planet, my notion of God, the reality at which this word points, has evolved - and is still evolving.

Having no boundaries, God is not a concept. The word 'God' refers to a notion, an energy like gravity - holding physical reality together.

'God', being love (1 Jn 4, 16) is a noun AND a verb (Ex 3, 14). Grammatically God is a noun. We speak about God both apophatically - saying what God is not: God is uncreated, infinite - AND cataphatically, what God is: creator, spirit, love. Like beauty, God is hard to define. Experience goes beyond the reach of words. "Come and see" (Jn 1, 39).

However, ontologically, God is ALSO a verb - well three verbs. God is isness - the *actus essendi* that sustains everything and answers the questions "Why and who is behind it all?" God is wisdom - the *actus dirigendi* - directing evolution these past 13.7 billion year – as well as conscience right now. God is Compassion - the *actus amandi* as demonstrated in the life of Jesus Christ: God in our human vernacular.

Applying that notion to Space-Time, there would be no creation without God. Without creation, there would be no Creator God in Space -Time. BOTH are necessary for both to be there.

Eternal, God was 'there' "brooding over the waters" (Gen1, 2) before the Big Bang 13.7 billion years ago. As the UK is in London yet also outside London, God transcends creation. Though within all, God is ALSO beyond Space-Time.

"It is in God that we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17, 28). "God who is over all, through all and within all." (Eph 4, 6). God is within everything, sustaining, directing evolution and energising the whole of Space-Time. As gravity is in everything - yet none of these things is gravity - to say that God is 'in all' does not imply pantheism.

Like gravity, dark matter and dark energy generate unity throughout the universe, God is there in our planet earth AS WELL AS in all the myriad galaxies that constitute the Cosmos.

Like gravity, God is ubiquitous, unseen, and even when ignored, always there.

Thanks to Jesus Christ's Paschal resurrection which declared his divinity, AND then fifty days later the palpable effects at Pentecost (Acts 2, 1-4), we know that God is relational. After all, to love you have to relate.

Whenever I am reading the gospels, I try to imagine how people saw Jesus while he walked on earth. As a runner becomes the victor only once he has crossed the finishing line first, Jesus was seen as divine only after his death and resurrection. During his life on earth, I do not believe he ever felt 'divine'. He merely tried to bring the Kingdom of God down to earth

We read in Genesis (1, 27) that we are made 'to the image of God.' We are male AND female so, coming to the word God from that perspective, in God there is Father, Son and *Ruach*, the feminine (in Hebrew) Spirit. Like God, we give, know and love.

In Genesis 2,18-24 we read, "Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam⁷ there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made⁸ into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

Solitary confinement is a punishment, all too frequently ending in suicide. Research has shown that social isolation and loneliness can increase mortality by up to 30%.

Not surprisingly, life has taught me that living by giving is the best way of living.

Living by loving (Deut 6, 5; Lev 19, 18) is more than 'doing God's will. It is living - however imperfectly - God's incarnate life: love. "No one can come to the Father except through me (Love incarnate)." (Jn 14,6).

The end indicates the means. After more than eight decades on earth and now living in the Kingdom of God, I can divide my prayer-life into three parts. At Mass, rather than starting with "calling to mind our sins" I begin by reminding the congregation that I celebrate mass to TAPS; to Thank, Ask, Praise and Sorry.

Then there is *Lectio divina*, and thirdly and mostly there is my walking together with God in silence, holding hands. This I always find calming, encouraging and motivating.

Lectio divina enables me to reflect on The Word that became flesh so we could not only read words, but experience divine life translated into our human vernacular.

Jesus Christ, the tip on the divine iceberg, showed – in our human vernacular – the quality, character and personality of the divine creator.

Jesus is man and thus sexual, AS WELL AS God. His resurrection showed he was divine.

I admit I have both virtues AND vices and use the vices to fight each other to live a virtuous life. As Churchill teamed up with horrible Stalin to beat the grotesque Hitler, I use my vanity to fight my greed and gluttony, and pride to fight my lust, envy, wrath, and sloth. Most of the time it works. I know that bad actions generate both guilt AND shame: guilt before God, shame before our society.

I am here to live AND to learn AND to love or even – as I like to put it -to live to learn to love, in all six sequences of these three verbs.

I know my life is shaped by both intentions – the steering wheel – AND motivations – the driving wheels of my life.

To make a success of our stay in space-time - to live in the Kingdom of God - we need both a moral accelerator AND a moral brake.

Our identity is generated by not only our name AND family BUT ALSO our nationality, culture, track record, language and values. “It is no longer I who live; it is Christ who lives in me.”(Gal 2, 20)

When I was aged around four and dropped my sweet-wrapper on a Prague pavement, my father taught me that “We Felzmanns don’t do that” My identity ruled my ethics. My father God sees what am doing. I have tried not to drop sweet wrappers as I have grown up. When I fail and do drop them, there is an act of contrition, or even the sacrament of confession, to pick them up.

As priest and social-entrepreneur, I am a leader AND, as someone trying to do God’s will, I know I am led. As priest I act out of duty AND love (Mt 25,40). It is often duty that gets me out of bed in the morning and love that keeps me keeping on fulfilling my roles.

Being human, I admit that though I am tough, I am ALSO vulnerable.

Thanks to Brexit, I have both a Czech AND a British passport: at home in the UK, I am welcome on the European mainland.

I am both a priest and thus set apart and considered ‘holy’ (“Father, your prayers have a direct link to God”) AS WELL AS human – with humanity’s needs.

Thanks to what the Japanese call ‘biorhythms’, I have good days AS WELL AS bad days. These are more challenging but help me understand the weaknesses of others.

We are made to the image AND likeness of God. (Gen 1, 26)

As image, or ikon, we are, well at our best we should be, a window to the divine. Our likeness, *omoiosis* or *omoousios* makes us like God. We have a human AND a divine life in the Kingdom of God on earth.

Human life is both serious and humorous, comic and tragic, individual and communitarian, with jokes and a sense of humour welding people together.

Consider appearances, including accents, AND values AS WELL AS actions before assessing anyone.

Christianity needed both Jesus AND Paul to start spreading worldwide.

Thank God for science AND technology; religion AND spirituality; science AND religion; technology AND spirituality.

The reckless needs to bring in a cautionary character; the optimist needs a pessimistic court jester warning him or her of dangers overlooked. I am an optimist – who carries an umbrella. We need to be as little children (Mt 18, 1-5), innocent as doves AND as wise as serpents (Mt 10, 16).

Life, for me, is both a pilgrimage AND a sport.

Jesus Christ is human AND divine: a sacrament of the divine in our human vernacular.

We have freedom AND responsibility. As a child of God *noblesse oblige*.

Virtues make values visible.

To live life to the full – a life of wellbeing - we need all four cardinal virtues:

Temperance – on the P

Prudence – on the I

Fortitude – on the E

Justice – on the S

Thanks to God's generosity, I know I have the embryos of the three theological virtues: faith, love and hope.

My life needs laughter and gravity, love of the good and hatred of evil. The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for *good* men to do nothing." (Erroneously attributed to Edmund Burke. More likely a precis of philosopher John Stuart Mill's 1867 inaugural address at the University of St. Andrews.)

I am – we all are – shaped by both nature AND nurture.

In great societies, there are both justice AND mercy. Justice is rendered when people receive their due, according to the law, be it God's law or man's law. An act of justice is typically an act of law and might be an act of vengeance and force originating in the left brain.

Mercy, on the other hand, means exercising forbearance – originating in the right brain, the home of God. An act of mercy is an act of grace and compassion. Laws, applying justice, are universal. Sympathy and empathy, incline us to show mercy. Logic sees justice. Love knows it needs to be merciful. While a judge administers justice, parents hope society will show mercy to their child.

An 'I' and a 'you' in love, generates a new identity, a 'we', and 'us'. Trying to understand the Trinitarian mystery of God, I asked myself "Which comes first, a parent or a child?" The answer appeared. "Neither. BOTH." Without a child there is no parent. Without parents there is no child" (Think handclap. Which hand claps the first?)

Of course, God is far more than all this but, for me at least, the Trinitarian God is not irrational. Words, as I suspect you know, are symbols of reality. Words about God, like fingers pointing at the stars, are like icons, which we must avoid turning into idols.

Once we accept the reality of God and commit ourselves to that creator-lover, we are home and dry. It hurts me to see so many of my friends refusing to accept there must be a creator God. It hurts to see – especially as they approach the end of their existence of earth - their lives so impoverished.

Thanks to my Eriskay inspiration and Imperial College education I have an unshakeable conviction of the reality that is the magnificent mystery we call God.

We need satisfying answers to not only our identity, BUT ALSO value and role: who we are, what we are worth AND why we are here: the purpose of our existence. I am here to embody, as well as I can, the Kingdom of God. Christ.

The answers that more than just satisfy me are I am a child of God, I am worth the infinity of God's love and I am here to help God improve creation and – through that endeavour - live to learn to love so as to become *capax Dei*, capable of life with God once I am – at death – born into divine eternity; currently a total mystery. "No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor human heart imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him." (1 Cor 2, 9)

I need to bear in mind the message of both Ash Wednesday – I am just dust AND Good Friday - I am worth the life of God incarnate in our human vernacular.

We, well I do, need BOTH victory AND defeat, to strive AND to fail, so as to become more Christlike: compassionate, understanding and forgiving the failures of others.

As Winston Churchill put, “Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm.”

People keen to improve their spiritual lives, know that they improve, and sustain their progress when helped by a spiritual guide. When I was far younger, they used to be called Spiritual Directors.

I see the universe as an organic unity – and our global city (never a village with its homogenous culture) as an inter-related organism in which - as in our bodies – what benefits an organ is good for the whole body.

While entropy rules the micro mechanical, it does not control my life nor the life of the universe which is expanding ever since it burst it into life some 13.7 billion years ago.

John Dunne (1572-1631) put it rather beautifully in his’s “For whom the bell tolls”.

No man is an island,
Entire of itself.
Each is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.
If a clod be washed away by the sea,
Europe is the less.
As well as if a promontory were.
As well as if a manor of thine own
Or of thine friend's were.
Each man's death diminishes me,
For I am involved in mankind.
Therefore, send not to know
For whom the bell tolls,
It tolls for thee.

“One half of the world cannot understand the pleasures of the other.” stated Jane Austen, in Emma. If the two halves got together, and shared their views, both might find greater delight in life.

Like God, I am an optimist. For humanity’s tomorrow, I have given my today. Joyfully.

It is impossible to deny that humanity today is experiencing one of the worst crises in history. In a world of absolute relativism, shallow materialism and moral degeneracy, idealistic young people are looking for rules, certainties, hierarchy, moral law, and infallibility, all of which can be found in the Catholic Church. And more people than ever, both Catholic and non-Catholic, see the crisis in religious terms.

Tradition AND renewal together can carry the Church forward into a shape that will enhance the world.

Dogma remains constant, maybe slightly refined. It is morality – what actions are deemed creative and salutary that, in a substantial part, needs to change.

As Christianity’s truth – its perception of reality – evolved, slavery, torture and usury had to go. Respect for - and thus coexistence with - science and its discoveries, for democracy, freedom of speech and gender equality gradually appeared.

I suspect and hope that eventually - though it will be after I have been born into divine eternity – there will be BOTH celibate and married, AS WELL AS male and female clergy in The Church.

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