

## **Your Journey Through Life: Healing Our Memories**

by Fr. Peter deSousa

"Children learn to walk through trial and error. They remember past mistakes, look beyond them and seek new ways of reaching their goals. If they did not remember their mistakes, they may be inclined to repeat them."

All of us have memories, both happy and painful. Because we have suffered, we can empathize with those who suffer in similar fashion, comforting them with the same comfort we have received. Read 2 Cor 1:3-7. Let us befriend our memories rather than ignore, deny or run away from them. When you can share them with a loving spouse, they lose their sting. I was never spanked or harshly scolded as a child at home. But once when I was ten, I was very rude to a servant who walked across the badminton court while I was playing, so that I missed scoring a point. My uncle who was my partner whacked me hard with his racquet. I was upset and humiliated. I complained to my dad who pointed out to me, that I had insulted a poor man who was my elder and could not speak back. I had failed to respect him and abused my position as his son. He gently suggested that I ask the man for forgiveness. I did so. Both the whack and the gentle suggestion had a salutary effect on me. In this memory there is no sting. It has made me compassionate.

But in buried memories that are unhealed, chronic anger, sadness, depression, fear, anxiety, shame or guilt may prevent us from functioning as loving persons. With a particular person like a nun; or a type of person, like a person in authority; or when in a particular social setting, like being interviewed for a job or when I fail to achieve a goal, do I tend to react in a manner that is irrational? When someone speaks in a loud voice or finds fault with me, how do I react?

As you share your life story with a loving, caring spouse, about your childhood, adolescence or early adulthood, you may recall certain failures, reprimands, humiliations, rejections, losses, sad or hurtful memories that bring back a lot of negative feelings. As your spouse lovingly and respectfully listens with care and understanding, you are no longer alone and see yourself as precious and loveable.

Your spouse reassures you that you are loveable and precious, no matter how you may have behaved. Seeing yourself through his/her eyes, your self-esteem is restored. Like the prodigal son who saw himself through the eyes of his loving father, and experienced the warmth of his embrace and the celebration of home-coming, you too can turn a limitation into a celebration. So share the event, the way you felt devalued, the negative feelings you had about yourself (resentment, unworthiness, fear, anxiety, shame, bitterness, sadness, loneliness). Your spouse reflects back your feeling to you as a way of empathizing with you. You feel understood, comforted and valued. You belong.

Now take a look at those who hurt you and ask God for the grace to forgive them. Place them beneath the cross of Jesus and allow his precious blood to cleanse them. Hear Jesus pray: "Father, forgive him/her for they know not what they do." Make his prayer your own. Ask your spouse to pray with you for a forgiving heart so that you may completely let go of any desire for revenge. You want to forgive those who hurt you as a true disciple of Jesus, so that you may also receive forgiveness in like measure.

If you are the one who hurt others, be reconciled in the sacrament of confession. If the person you hurt is alive and it will be beneficial to them, ask their forgiveness. If you need to clear their good name or make restitution, do so. Do not cling any more to guilt, but believe that the precious blood of Jesus is all powerful to wash away the vilest stains of sin.

Having been cleansed and emptied of all these negative sentiments, ask God's healing and Holy Spirit, to fill your emptied heart with charity, joy and peace, patience, understanding of others, kindness and fidelity, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5:22-23). Ask your spouse to pray with you earnestly so that the fruit of the Spirit may make you a more loving spouse and parent. There are many memories in all of us that need healing and many of them are in the subconscious.

God gives spouses and parents the grace to heal. So avail of this grace. It is God who heals. Who can be closer and more intimate with you, than your spouse? You are called to be naked and unashamed with each other, not just physically, but also spiritually and emotionally. You are called to make a total gift of yourself to each other. So when husbands and wives share with each other in a vulnerable way, they build up trust between them. They can express their healing love intimately in a conjugal embrace, which one cannot do with a holy person who prays over you. Jesus is in your midst, as you heal in his name.

Likewise, children are the personification and fruit of conjugal love. Parents can embrace a son or daughter between them and listen with love to their fears, hurts and cry for healing. That parental embrace is healing and restores a son or daughter who has gone astray or is in need of healing. This is true even of adult children. Physical, emotional and spiritual healing accompany one another. It is Abba Father who heals and who shares the gift of parenthood with you. Allow Him to do so.

Many marriages and homes are unhappy, because of alcoholism, addictions, nagging, lack of respect, no deep communication between spouses or between parents and children, lack of forgiveness, strained relationships, coldness, sarcasm, mistrust, suspicion and chronic illnesses. All these flow from buried anger, fear, guilt or anxiety. Where there is prayerful sharing, healing and reassuring love, these same homes will be transformed. Walk humbly with your God and with one another and you will be able to share the peace of Jesus with each other everyday. Healing of memories brings peace to the home and all who dwell therein.