

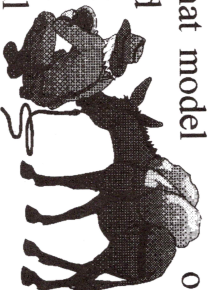
Tolerance Acceptance Forgiveness

Take a walk through the Gospels. Pick out the people Jesus spotlighted. Not one was a run-of-the-mill, cookie-cutter version of the populace. Diversity was his theme. There was a sharp Samaritan woman with five husbands. It was to **this** lady that Jesus first revealed himself as Messiah. And she was a *half-breed*, yet. That must have frosted the poobahs. About the Roman centurion seeking a cure for his man-servant, Jesus said, "Never have I found such faith in all Israel. . . ." And the unblinded fellow who preached to the preachers. Oh, how they loved that! Look at Mary Magdalene, and Peter, and John, and Nicodemus, and Zacchaeus up a tree. *Hey, Little Z! Come down from the tree. I need you to open your house to me.*



And how about all the beggars? and the lepers with bells. Jeez, he went up *close* and spoke to them, and even wanted them to come

back and thank him when he healed them. How about that model of kindness, the Good Samaritan. No Jew, priest or rabbi here. And how about the Prodigal Father! (Yup, that's right. The Prodigal *Father!*) The son only squandered cash. The father squandered *forgiveness*.



How about the lady with the issue of blood? One feisty lady. Bold and gutsy, she. "Who touched me?" he asked. "What! Are you nuts?" they said. "A hundred people" And how about that widow who dropped a penny in the basket? She made it into history.

You know, the only people Christ really excoriated were the hypocrites. He called them SOB's and wastes of skin. Go check it out. Unsanitize what he said. Redd Foxx wasn't the first to turn the air blue. These goody-goodies lorded it over the marginal and poor - - - and women - - - any time they got the chance. Wealth and status let the rich sit closer to the Ark in the Temple, and supposedly, closer to

G-D. Harlots and tax-collectors will get there before *you!* Ah, for camels and needles! Christ had no use for hypocrites.

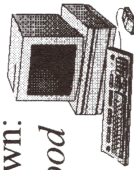
Jesus took you as you were. He didn't ask what kind you were, what color you were, from which side of the river you came, who your father or mother were, who your housemates or lovers were. He offered healing and forgiveness to the open-hearted.

There's the rub. He gave away the keys of the kingdom to *everyone*. Hey, folks: Behold the Prodigal Locksmith. His master key is forgiveness, acceptance, tolerance. And he told us to give it to *each other!* We, the most marginal of people, stand in a good tradition, a Gospel tradition. We can give away the keys of the Kingdom, just as we have been given.

In a previous eon, I thought the Gospels were just a good way to live, an additional *nice extra* to include as icing on a pretty good cultural cake. I think differently now. I think Christ's way is no longer *optional*. Whether preached by Christ, Hillel, Ghandi, King or

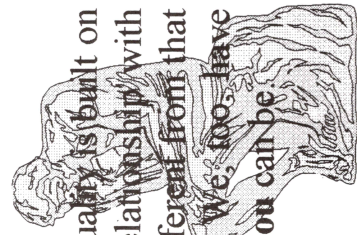
education, entry-level worker training, and expanded religious services.

This brochure, too, has grown: from composition on an old *Underwood* with cut-and-paste pictures, to computer-generated clip-art and layout. We deliver it, camera-ready, to our gracious printers at *Graphic Expressions, Inc.*



One of the missions of *St. Francis Neighborhood Center* over the past thirty-three years has been the push toward self-actualization of individual talent and spirit. In today's world, individuality and diversity are reviled. Only white-bread clones are safe. Everybody else is fair game. The truth is, however, that diversity is a prime requisite for survival.

Furthermore, one's spirituality is built on one's individuality. Rodin's relationship with God and his fellows was far different from that of Miles Davis. It had to be. ~~We, too, have~~ always said: Be the best that **you** can be.



Hi, folks. On the cover, you see the last printing of the picture which has, through the kindness and talent of Don Nayden, been looking at you since 1974. In the next few months, our cover will become history along with the buildings at 936 Whitelock Street.

By the time you get this, we, hopefully, will have signed for the new building at 2405 Linden Avenue, and started rebuilding it. It needs everything. Pipes, sinks, toilets, radiators, furnaces, wiring are all gone: ripped out by "souvenir hunters" and fed into the underground economy. We have to start over.

On the one hand, we are sad that this sacred ground, which has been the site of God's presence for so many of us and our neighbors, will be demolished and buried under some vague new politically planned improvement. On the other hand, beginning a new phase of St. Francis Neighborhood Center means undeniable excitement afoot. Debbie is already planning young people's programs, and others are envisioning voter education and registration, health-care

Buddha, forgiveness is, today, *essential for survival*. Bergen-Belsen, Burundi and Bosnia cry out that intolerance kills . . . **everybody**. It doesn't pick and choose. It never runs out of targets.

The keys are the hope. Buying into tolerance, acceptance, forgiveness, living with diverse and different neighbors works. It is the way we're going to survive as a world. The keys are there. All you gotta do is . . .



Easter and Passover Blessings from St. Francis. Pray for us. The next few months will be exciting, at least. Resurrections can be fun, and a lot of work. We'll keep you posted.

Many thanks to all of you who sent us gifts around the holidays.

For Love, Love & Debbie

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