



Moving On – A brief tête-à-tête with Choicers

February 2004



FRIAR TALK ... By Fr. Martin Low

If not you, than who?

Congratulations to Choice for running a Retreat House at Jurong West. You all have a distinctive role to play in the Church's apostolate. To play this role effectively, you need a distinctive spirituality. For you, this spirituality is absorbed in a distinctive undertaking through the motto **"To know, love and serve Him"**.

God indeed made you as the old catechisms insisted, "to praise, revere, and serve him in this life and to be happy with Him for ever in the next." This is true of every human being. But Christ baptised you not simply for your own salvation but for you to transform the world, on which you walk and work. Where you fulfill your distinctive function, is not in a vacuum sanctuary but in your world! Few of you will ever fly to a refugee camp in Thailand or work with squatters in India or Philippines. Your mission territory is where you live and move and have your being. Your apostolic turf is in your office, the armed force, hospital, school, your own family and of course the Choice Retreat House.

There must be something distinctive about your spirituality. Not all Christians develop their likeness to Christ in the same way. A Trappist monk sanctifies himself singing God's praises in a choir or in his works on the fields, in long hours of silent contemplation. But this is certainly not who you are.

So, unlike the monks in the past, you need not renounce the world or live in isolation. Instead, fashion your life with God every day and at any time – on weekends, at Sunday Masses or even during the half-time period of a football match. Embrace your world. You embrace it because it mirrors the God who made it. You embrace it because it is your task - to move *your* acre of God's world closer to His kingdom. Ask ceaselessly to "know Him more clearly, love Him more dearly and follow Him more closely."

That word "follow" is the operative word. A few do follow Jesus into a lonelier place: a Carmelite convent in Kampong Bahru or a friary at Bukit Batok. But for most of you, use your knowledge and love towards service and help fashion men and women to unfold God's beauty and creation.

A weekend at Choice Retreat House is not primarily an escape from the world. It is a fresh introduction to your world. You should not return to your lives thereafter only to endure it, instead return with the grace to transform it! Yes, return with a new vision and energy to walk through your city as Jesus walked through

Palestine - healing with your touch, comforting the sorrowful and strengthening the feeble, driving out today's devils of selfish choices that create a culture of death.

Go forth - "Rooted and grounded in love ... the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge (Eph 3:17-19)". Go forth in love to this world which is your arena, your playground and your house of prayer. Go forth to change it, to restore it in the image of the God, who created it and saw "it was very good" (Gen 1:31). If not you, then who?

Fr. Martin Low is Choice Singapore's Spiritual Director

Mistakes that are Great!

"Genius? Nothing! Sticking to it is the genius! ... I've failed my way to success."

--Thomas Edison

One of the many messages we take back after a Choice weekend is about forgiving and reconciling after mistakes have been made. To many, it is almost a cliché when we say it is alright to make mistakes in our lives as long as we learn from them – it will make us a stronger person - right....

Before we dismiss this notion as another attempt to instill Choice values, let us examine some of the great mistakes the world has benefited from.

We begin by journeying back to our secondary school days where we were tormented into memorizing dates for our history examinations. Remember who discovered America? Well, to refresh your memory - it was Italian explorer Christopher Columbus. However, his discovery was one big mistake because señor Columbus thought he was sailing to Asia when he took off from Spain. Instead, he ended up lost somewhere in the Americas...

On a more relevant note, what does cola drinks, chocolate chip cookies, Post-it notes, cardiac pacemakers and Penicillin have in common? Nothing in particular, except they all arose from mistakes, accidents or failures. Here's what happened.

Cola drinks were the result of a delicious accident. In 1886 a pharmacist named John Pemberton cooked up a medicinal syrup in a large brass kettle slung over an open fire, stirring it with an oar. When he was done, he figured he had created a fine tonic for people who were tired, nervous, or plagued with sore teeth.

He and his assistant mixed it with ice water, sipped it, and proclaimed it tasty. They wanted some more, and the assistant accidentally used carbonated water to mix the second batch. Voila! Instead of medicine, these men had created a fizzy beverage - one that is now consumed around the world.

As for chocolate chip cookies, well, Innkeeper Ruth Wakefield was baking Butter Drop Do cookies one day in the 1930s, using a recipe that dated back to colonial times. She cut up a Nestlé chocolate bar and put the chunks in the batter, expecting them to melt. Wakefield thought she'd be pulling chocolate-flavored cookies out of the oven. Instead, what she got were butter cookies studded with gooey chocolate chips. Her mistake became one of the most favorite cookies of all time.

Yellow sticky notes, officially known as Post-it Notes, got their start in 1968 when a 3M researcher tried to improve adhesive tape. What he got was a semisticky adhesive--not exactly what you want out of tape. Even so, he knew he had something cool--he just didn't know what to do with it.

Four years later, another 3M scientist was getting frustrated. This scientist was a member of his church choir, and he kept dropping the bookmarks stuck in his hymnal. What he needed was something that would stick

without being too sticky--something just like that weak glue his colleague had accidentally created. In 1980 the Post-it Note became an official product and a huge hit.

While the above enhances our lives (well, the benefits of cola drinks and chocolate chip cookies are debatable), some errors actually save lives.

Before Wilson Greatbatch came along, people with irregular heartbeats had to control their pulse using a painful external device invented in 1952 by Paul Zoll. The external pacemaker was about the size of a small television, and administered life-saving jolts of electricity, which sometimes burned the skin.

Greatbatch, a medical researcher, was working on a device to record irregular heartbeats when he accidentally inserted a resistor of the wrong size. He noticed that the circuit pulsed, stopped, and pulsed again--just like a human heart. After two years of tinkering, Greatbatch had made the first implantable pacemaker. He later invented a corrosion-free lithium battery to power it, and millions have benefited.

Penicillin is another famous example of a mistake turned good. In 1928 scientist Alexander Fleming noticed that mold spores had contaminated one of the bacteria samples he had left by an open window. Instead of discarding his ruined experiment, Fleming took a close look and noticed the mold was dissolving the harmful bacteria. And that's how we got penicillin, which helps people around the world recover from infections.

So, the next time someone makes a silly mistake which ends up irritating you, calm down, pour yourself a nice cold glass of Coke, have a Mrs. Field's chocolate chip cookie and write on that yellow Post-it note:

Mistakes can be good!

Akan Datang...

◆ **The Great Choice Migration**

The Choice Family is officially taking flight at dawn on **April 18th, 2004** from ME House to our very own Choice Retreat House. Help us make this event a memorable one by joining in our migration from the past and into our future. We will be forming 2-km rallies from ME House to Choice Retreat House and we need you to join in. Archbishop Nicholas Chia will be blessing the Choice Retreat House thereafter, followed by a Tea Party and Mass – so come join us!

Simply reply to our registration couple, Terence & Stephanie at choicewk@singnet.com.sg with your contact details and they will contact you soon.

◆ **Our next Choice Weekend for 2004, held at the Choice Retreat House, is from March 26th to March 28th, 2004.**

If you know of any friends who may be interested to attend this weekend, please encourage them to contact Terence & Stephanie Ho, our registration couple, at 9695 6599 / 6219 0291 or email to choicewk@singnet.com.sg

Final Note from the Editors:

We would like to hear from you if you wish to contribute to future newsletters or have any comments/feedback to improve this newsletter. Please send them to choice@cheerful.com.

Kelvin & Angela Tan, Communications Couple