

## Spiritual Victories

Sometimes it can seem as though we live in a world characterized by defeat. Media headlines feed our appetite to be shocked, dismayed, outraged, and perplexed. There is a seemingly endless supply of instances where justice, stability, compassion, integrity, and dignity seem to be defeated.

At EACH we work with people who experience defeat on a daily basis. Our purpose as an organization is to stand front and centre in this battle so that compassion, opportunity and second-chances have victory.

But in this struggle another perspective needs to be heard. It is a perspective that offers hope that is deep and abiding. It is anchored in the recognition that we are not our defeats or, for that matter, our successes.

At the last EACH Breakfast Gathering we explored the topic of Spiritual Victories. One of the participants shared a story about a young boy living in foster care. Growing up in a world of dislocation and instability anger had become his second language. To encourage his interest in music his foster parents had bought him a guitar. Soon afterwards, in a state of uncontrolled rage, he destroyed that guitar. The next morning a new guitar sat at the end of his bed and not a word was spoken by his foster parents, or by him. This angry young boy became a musician.

This is a story that shows what is possible when we stop seeing our failures as the basis of our identity. For those of us blessed with good opportunities the task will be equally difficult - to not see our success as the basis of our identity.

Spiritual victories have the character of revealing ourselves to us; of who we are at our core, at our centre. Needless to say this can be an extremely unpleasant experience! What will we find there? Who will we meet? But if by grace we can know ourselves as sacred and holy, our failures and our success will take their appropriate place in what is merely a passing parade of highs and lows, wins and losses, successes and failures.

When I was in the desert I met a man who told me that eventually we end up 'chuckling at our sins'. We come to discover that those things that separate us from truth, dignity, God, the fullness of life, *are not us*. In fact they are so utterly not us that we chuckle at them as they pass in and out of our lives. Our failures, our foolishness, our frailties are not us, and recognizing this we might begin to live out of who we truly are.

This Wednesday at the Breakfast Gathering we will continue to explore what spiritual victories mean to us. Come along and begin your day with meditation, conversation and a free brekky!

Your Chaplain, James