

# INTEGRITY-PALM BEACH --- ST. ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, LAKE WORTH

*Twenty-Minute Presentation* – February 11, 2006 – Canon Nolan

## NOTES FOR “BUFFERS AND BOUNDARIES WHILE LOVING GOD AND OTHERS”

### I. LOVING GOD (in biblical Christianity – as contrasted with some other perspectives)

Becoming “lost in God” to the point of negating one’s self or one’s self-awareness is contrary to the Summary of the Law. (However, this practice is found among many “mystics” in the world’s religions.)

“Mystical union” with Transcendence or with “pure spirituality” is believed by some to be a religious experience of Ultimate Reality, but any radical downplay of the self (to the point of no self-awareness, like in a silent trance) is different from the love for God mentioned in the Summary of the Law. Instead, com-munion wherein you remain you, and the personal, biblical God remains the personal God is inherent in Christ-like love of God and prayer. There is no indication whatsoever that Christ engaged in “non-self-awareness” of any kind for any reason. Christ-like prayer to God is not utter silence, like a “dreamless sleep.” In biblical perspectives, humans have God-given, personal boundaries in relations with God.

### II. LOVING OTHERS

a. We all need community, however small. [See [“Principle of Community” – page 163.](#)]

b. Each person is limited by space, time and personal capacities, resources, and so on. [[“Principle of Balance” – page 164.](#)]

c. Did Christ try to meet the needs of everyone within range? An Episcopal biblical scholar has noted that “for the most part Jesus confined his mission to Israel... His approaches to the Gentiles were strictly exceptional.” [Fuller, *Preaching The Lectionary*, rev. ed., p. 471] [See [“Involvement” – page 165.](#)]

d. Everyone who loves others will someday die; no one is indispensable to the evolution of the planet’s peoples, never mind one’s “neighbors.” An exaggerated sense of responsibility for loving others can provide a draining imbalance that is self-defeating. The rising of the sun tomorrow morning does not depend on any individual human being. A little humility, please!

e. There is no formula by which we can all arrive at what our individual limitations are, where our borders, buffers, or boundaries ought to be in every instance, but clearly we all need humane limits for one’s own space, time, and re-creation. Other factors as we love others: am I a born introvert or an extrovert? (What is my “wiring?”) What are my loving obligations to myself, my significant other(s), my family, my friends, my various communities, my nation, the world? Do I think that I have an equal obligation to all?

f. An Episcopal bishop has suggested that an individual is successful in ministry if (s)he has touched some lives with the love of Christ – and if (s)he has allowed some others to touch his/her life likewise. Would it be accurate to replace the word “ministry” with the word “love?”

### III. LIMIT SETTING REMINDERS AS ONE LOVES OTHERS

Appropriate reminders for oneself and others: *"I'm not comfortable with that." "That's not what I'm here for." "I'm already overextended and can't help you with this. Let me suggest that you ..."*[referral]“I'm sorry, but I have other commitments." "No." (said calmly and politely)

Reminders for oneself: *"Not everyone has to like me." "Who appointed me God and the world's Caretaker?" "I can't win them all." "I'll do what I reasonably can in the situation." "I don't have to do anything perfectly. (Only God can do that!)"*

Remember Thomas Merton: "To allow one's self to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit one's self to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything is to succumb to violence. Frenzy destroys our inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of our work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful."

See [www.philosophy-religion.org](http://www.philosophy-religion.org) “Living Issues In Ethics” Chapters 5-8.