

# COVENANT

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## Embracing Healing Together

*"They found the stone rolled away from the tomb..." (Luke 24:2)*



One of the well-known details from the Easter narratives in Sacred Scripture that stands out to me in a special way this year is the reference to the heavy stone that had been rolled away from the tomb. Perhaps this caught my particular attention because it seems as if our world is in need of a variety of heavy stones to be rolled away. After two full years of our struggle with the overwhelming distress of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are just now cautiously moving ahead with life, and, in another prominent global example, we find ourselves in shock over the disheartening fact that a war is being waged against Ukraine, as we try to digest images of destruction, violence, and despair, and discern ways to best assist those in need.

As a mental health provider and as a priest, I accompany others through times of personal crises and I encounter many personal narratives in which there are heavy stones that need removal. And, if we are honest, we all have, as part of our story, obstacles that can block our pathways to life and happiness. Indeed, in our lives, there are various heavy stones which need to be removed to embrace healing. I speak for many when I say that our faith is essential in the process of facing the hardships of life. Our faith strengthens our resilience, nourishes our perseverance, and fosters our hope, allowing us to take small but steady steps forward. I am reminded, as witnessed in our healing environment of Southdown, that the process of removing those heavy stones is best done in community. In our human family, we need each other to recognize what those heavy stones are in our lives, and to roll up our sleeves to help move them. If I try by myself, I may easily get discouraged and give up; I may choose an easier path, a detour of sorts, which may feel good in the moment, but which does not bring about healing; I may run out of steam and withdraw or isolate.

Trusted friends and loved ones, who are willing to accompany us on our journey, can also be an essential help in the process. At times, attentive, respectful professional help, in the form of a psychotherapist or a spiritual director, may be needed. In a residential treatment program, an unconditionally loving community of support surrounds our residents, with one goal in mind—to roll away those heavy stones together.

I take courage from the writers in this edition of Covenant and their messages of how we help each other to support a process of healing. Greta, from her perspective of spiritual direction, reminds us of the importance of our images of God, and how we need to identify and help each other reinforce those images that are truly life-giving. And Amy, in her role as a nutritionist, describes how holistic and integrative pathways fuel the mind, body, and soul to achieve long-term health.

Let us continue to recognize the beauty and dignity of human life, appreciating that we are all on a common journey and in need of each other's help. When we respectfully and humbly attend to one another, inviting the strength of our good and compassionate God, we can embrace healing together. May our world be blessed with the removal of those heavy stones!

Sincerely,



**Rev. Stephan Kappler, Psy.D., C.Psych., R.Psych.**  
President and Chief Psychologist

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# Our Team Approach to Psychological Assessments

By Rev. Stephan Kappler, Psy.D., C.Psych., R.Psych.



When we experience a physical ailment, most of us would fully expect that our physician clarifies what disease or condition is occurring, before recommending a course of action/treatment. This process of diagnosis is completed by way of analysis of the signs and symptoms that are present

in the individual, usually by a variety of means, including a thorough diagnostic interview, history taking, investigative examinations, and a review of other available evidence. This important principle—that diagnosis precedes treatment—also applies in the realm of a psychological ailment.

In the psychological context, the process of clarifying what is actually occurring, what may be contributing to the situation that is causing distress, and determining a diagnosis, is called an assessment. While this term is not exclusive to psychology, a psychological assessment allows the individual experiencing the distress to engage in a process of clarification, understanding more fully what is contributing, and what potential treatment pathways may be available. The process may also bring clarity to the individual's family, religious community, leadership, or whomever initiated the referral. We generally distinguish between comprehensive clinical assessments and candidate assessments.

At Southdown, we have learned that a collaborative, holistic, and integrative approach to assessment provides an optimal context for this important process. An essential element of the five-day clinical assessment process is that the individual engaging with us, either in person for an onsite assessment or online for a videoconference tele-psychological assessment, feels safe, respected, and listened to in a non-judging manner. Another important element of the assessment process is that multidisciplinary team members bring their particular expertise to bear, and that we pay loving attention to all aspects of the participant's life, including their physical health (nursing interview), their mental health (psychiatric and psychological interview and psychometric testing), their behavioral health (behavioral health/addiction interview), their spiritual health (spiritual life interview), and their cognitive/intellectual health (psychological/cognitive interview and testing). Our dedicated team of women and men, in addition to attentively listening, also reviews written materials provided by the individual being assessed, including a variety of tailored assessment instruments.

A crucial part of this collaborative process is the opportunity to review in a feedback session what it is that was learned in the assessment, to share with the individual assessed what the team perceived as their areas of strength, their areas of growth, and their diagnosis (if applicable), and what the team recommends as an optimal treatment path. The feedback session occurs at the end of the five-day process in an informal, shared manner, with room for questions,

clarifications, and conversation. A respectfully conducted, collaborative assessment does not have surprises at the end of the week in the feedback session, as the lead clinician will communicate throughout the week with the person assessed how the process is unfolding and most of the time, what has been learned is not new to the person but they themselves recognize the findings. After hearing the feedback verbally, a written report follows in a timely manner, again with an opportunity to connect with the team to ask follow-up questions or seek clarification.

We all know that a one-size-fits-all method is not a good approach to anything, and so Southdown aims to tailor our assessments to the particular needs of the individual assessed or the needs of the referring entity. Many times, that tailoring includes providing an assessment in French or Spanish.

The same principles of utilizing a respectful, non-judging, multidisciplinary team approach also apply to our candidate assessments. The emphasis in a candidate assessment lies on a process of *screening in* psychologically and spiritually mature candidates, and *screening out* candidates who may not have the required affective maturity or psychological and spiritual balance required for the formation process. The holistic perspective takes into account the individual's emotional, psychological, physical, cognitive, and spiritual functioning, and the realm of behavioral health as well as psychosexual development is an area of focus. Ideally, a collaboratively conducted candidate assessment, offers a great opportunity for the candidate to learn more about themselves, and it helps them, as well as formators and vocation directors, in the formulation of areas of growth and learning goals.

Similar to clinical assessments, Southdown can also tailor candidate assessments to the needs of the referring organization and the needs of the candidate. The capacity to tailor candidate assessments is important, as we are privileged to conduct candidate assessments not only for many Roman Catholic dioceses, religious orders, and permanent diaconate programs, but also for Anglican candidates for the diaconate or priesthood. Again, the tailoring may include providing an assessment in French or Spanish.

I am proud and grateful to share that we have seen great success with the provision of our assessment services, both clinical as well as candidate, via tele-psychological means. Our assessment services can be provided across Canada, and in California, Massachusetts, New York, and all participating PsyPact\* States. If you have any questions about assessment services and our holistic and integrative approach to them, please contact me. I will be happy to share more information with you.

\*For more information about PSYPACT visit [psyfact.com](https://www.psyfact.com).

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# To Gaze On A God We Can Adore

By Greta DeLonghi, M.A., DSD



A young man once told me that he struggled with perfectionism and fear of failure, so he avoided aspects of his job. He also told me that he was “afraid of letting down God.” No surprise there. We tend to project our own life-limiting expectations and experiences onto God. And our images of God matter.

“Our image of God shapes not only what we think God is, but also what we think Christian life is,” says writer Marcus Borg.<sup>1</sup> A journal paper by Southdown clinicians published in *Spirituality in Clinical Practice* (August 2020) found that positive religious coping depends on a benevolent as opposed to punitive image of God.<sup>2</sup> In *Good Goats: Healing Our Image of God*, the authors urge us to attend to our image of God: “It is not so we’ll know what afterlife is like. Rather, it is because we become like the God we adore.”<sup>3</sup>

This extends to how we view our society, say the authors of *Good Goats*. If we believe in a vengeful, punishing God that calculates our worth for eternal life on the basis of our work, we are more likely to adopt an economic system based on merit. Or if we believe God gives up on people and does away with them by sentencing them to hell, we can give up on some people forever and sentence them to death through capital punishment. According to the authors of *Good Goats*, “Whatever our addiction as a society, whether it be to violence or retribution as opposed to peace and compassion, or hoarding money as opposed to sharing, we usually mimic addictions we attribute to the God we adore.”<sup>4</sup>

So how can we stop clinging and let go of life-limiting images of God? The accompaniment of a spiritual director can help us uncover and identify our operative images of God. Awareness and acceptance precede change and healing. There are spiritual practices that can lead to holding more life-giving images. The authors of *Good Goats* say the easiest way is to smile at a person who loves you and allow that person to smile back at you. “Taking in the smile of someone who loves us ... can heal us if we know that God loves us, just for a start, at least as much as the

people who love us most.”<sup>5</sup> Along that vein, we need a kind of felt or affective experience of God identified, as Thomas Merton did, as “Mercy within Mercy within Mercy.”<sup>6</sup> Using the contemplative practice of *lectio divina* to meditate with a Scripture reading might touch and surprise us. In Psalm 131, for example, we are with a generous and feminine God, “like a weaned child on its mother’s breast” (131.3). Or, entering contemplatively into a gospel story, like the parable of the prodigal son, we might see the merciful father running to meet us in our brokenness. We might also contemplate the ordinary events of our daily lives for those moments of felt grace and gratitude in the way St. Ignatius of Loyola suggested we do in the Daily Examen.

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The short answer to changing our image of God is to change our gaze, as the psalmist suggests: “O God, you are my God, eagerly I seek you ... So I would gaze upon you in your holy place ...” (Ps. 63.1-3)<sup>7</sup> That “holy place” might be in nature—or “God’s Tabernacle” as the great Canadian painter Emily Carr called it.<sup>8</sup> I would highlight here the Franciscan practice of *visio divina* or holy seeing with nature or art. Franciscan brother Ignatius Feaver, in his book *Holy Seeing, A Visual Invitation to Prayer*,<sup>9</sup> writes

about the Church tradition of gazing upon the crucified Christ.<sup>10</sup> The cross becomes the place of our encounter with crucified love, as this breathtaking prayer by St. Bonaventure describes:

Christ on the cross bows his head,  
waiting for you, that he may kiss you,  
His arms outstretched,  
that they may embrace you,  
His hands are open, that he may embrace you,  
His body spread out  
that He may give himself totally,  
His feet are nailed,  
that He may stay there,  
His side is open for you,  
That He may let you enter there.<sup>11</sup>

Now that is an image of God to keep our gaze on and to adore—one indeed of Mercy within Mercy within Mercy. ■

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1 Borg, M.J. (1997). *The God We Never Knew: Beyond dogmatic religion to a more authentic contemporary faith*. San Francisco: Harper, 57.  
2 Kappler, S., Talitman, E., Cavaliere, C., DeLonghi, G., Sy, M. (August 2020). Underdeveloped affective maturity and unintegrated psychosexual identity as contributors to clergy abuse and boundary violations: Clinical observations from residential treatment of Roman Catholic clergy at The Southdown Institute. *Journal of Spirituality in Clinical Practice*, 11.  
3 D. Linn, Linn, S., Linn, M. (1994). *Good Goats: Healing Our Image of God*. Paulist Press, 42.  
4 *Ibid.*, 42-43.  
5 *Ibid.*, 50.  
6 Woodhouse, P., (2015). *Life in the Psalms*. London: Bloomsbury, 70.  
7 *Ibid.*, 80.  
8 Feaver, O.F.M. (Cap), Br. I. (2020). *Holy Seeing: A Visual Invitation to Prayer*. Novalis, 37.  
9 Feaver, 1.  
10 Woodhouse, 72.  
11 Feaver, 1.

# Integrative and Holistic Nutrition

By Amy Torch, RD CDE



Over time, we have become a culture oriented on convenience in today's fast-paced, high-demand environment, and this includes how and what we eat. It has become much easier to choose processed foods, or order in fast food, when hunger hits than it is to cook a fresh wholesome dinner. The cost of convenience, according to holistic nutritionists, is not so much the impact on your wallet as it is the impact on your health.

During the COVID-19 Pandemic over the last two years, there has been an increase of obesity and diabetes. Additionally, the link between our health and what we eat has been more prominent, and many people are acknowledging the benefits of holistic nutrition to not only fuel but also heal their bodies.

## What is Integrative and Holistic Nutrition?

Integrative Nutrition® is a concept trademarked by the Institute for Integrative Nutrition and describes a specific way of eating, stating that "food is not just about physical nutrition, but also has an emotional, mental, and spiritual component." This concept is also known as Holistic Nutrition. Specific foods introduced include whole foods that are unprocessed and non-refined, organic, and locally grown to encourage and promote optimal health, disease prevention and overall well-being. Client testimonials demonstrate positive results when applying this lifestyle approach.

## Known Benefits of a Holistic Lifestyle

Holistic eating encompasses not only fueling the body with wholesome food but also provides nutrients to heal the entire body and one's chronic condition. Some known benefits and improvements may include:

- Improving immune system
- Diabetes Management by improving blood sugar
- Improving heart disease by lowering LDL cholesterol and increasing HDL
- Lowering blood pressure and improving hypertension
- Weight loss and management
- Reducing the risk of disease including cancer, gout, arthritis
- Improving mood and energy level
- Aiding constipation relief
- Improving digestion and aiding with Ulcerative Colitis
- Enhancing optimal sleep patterns

Many health experts believe that eating food in its natural and whole state is a significant way to improve health and prevent disease; however, convenience has detoured some of these better options over the years. While following a completely holistic diet can be pricey and time-consuming for some, minor modifications have been shown to make a significant effect on overall health and disease management. Firstly, you can start small by choosing water or freshly squeezed organic juice instead of soda or high

sugary coffee and cold drinks. Additionally, shopping at your local farmer's market, purchasing fresh foods that you can prepare, and limiting pre-packaged and highly processed foods can significantly contribute to optimal health and well-being.

## Top Beneficial Holistic Nutrition Changes to Diet and Lifestyle

- **Limit sweets:** Artificial sweeteners, corn syrup and refined sugars may add flavour and sweetness to your meal but can contribute to negative health outcomes. Choose naturally flavoured sugars, such as fruit.
- **Drink water:** As always, water is the first choice for fluids, recommending two litres of water per day. Limit excess soda, caffeinated beverages, and alcohol.
- **Choose whole foods:** For snacking options, try fruit and vegetables with raw nuts and/or seeds and avocados.
- **Limit sodium intake:** Excess sodium contributes to hypertension, or high blood pressure. Even though the recommended daily sodium intake is between 1,500 and 2,300 mg per day, most people consume far more than this. Avoid highly processed foods and remove the saltshaker from the dinner table.
- **Choose whole grains:** White starches are stripped of their nutrition and fibre; therefore, it is essential to choose 100% whole grain whenever possible to ensure an intake of fibre and optimal nutritive consumption.
- **Eat healthy fatty acids:** Healthy fats are optimal for brain and heart health and are essential to an overall nutritive dense diet. Choose moderate amounts of organic cold-pressed olive oils, such as extra virgin olive oil or flaxseed oil, on foods. Avoid trans-fatty acids from hydrogenated oils, and limit saturated animal fats from meat and dairy.
- **Portion control:** Follow the plate method for your food portions to ensure adequate intake. For example, a single serving of fish or a piece of chicken is one-quarter of the plate, or the size of a deck of cards. Vegetables should cover half your plate.
- **Go organic:** Choosing organic whenever possible helps to limit pesticides, herbicides, and antibiotics in foods.
- **Moderation:** Food is one of life's greatest pleasures. It is important to have fun with meal preparation, allow yourself a treat mindfully, and give yourself permission to eat your favourite meals.

Healthy eating is not about deprivation; it is about being mindful while enjoying fueling your mind, body, and soul to achieve long-term health. Before making any major dietary changes, it is important to consult with your family physician, or Registered Dietitian, especially if you are contemplating holistic/integrative nutrition to manage or improve a chronic illness. However, many of the recommendations noted in this article are Dietitian approved as well. ■

**Covenant** is produced and published by The Southdown Institute. Its purpose is to inform and educate the readership about clinical issues that surface in our work and to invite integration of the emotional and spiritual aspects of our lives.

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