

# Wholeness and Holiness

*How to Be Sane, Spiritual, and Saintly*



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Maryknoll, New York 10545

## Introduction

*An inner wholeness keeps pressing its still unfulfilled  
claims upon us.*

—EMMA JUNG, *THE GRAIL LEGEND*

Our lifetime on this earth offers us three magnificent chances to evolve into the fullness of our humanity:

We can become wholly who we are.

We can be wholesome in how we act.

We can be holy in how we live.

The first requires psychological work and reflection. The second calls for spiritual awareness and practices. The third is a grace that leads to dedicated action.

From a psychological perspective, sanity is needed to survive and thrive in the world. The development of our body-mind is fulfilled when we are psychologically sound. In this book, sanity is not simply the opposite of madness. It is defined as full mental health and exuberant well-being.

From a wholeness perspective, we feel a longing in ourselves for something more than individual surviving and thriving. We are oriented toward an ever-expanding spiritual consciousness. The evolution of our body-mind is fulfilled when we are spiritually motivated.

From a faith perspective, we believe that sanctity is our divinely imprinted calling and destiny. The divine purpose of our body-mind is fulfilled when we are saintly in our choices.

These three intertwine and beam out to the world as three rays of one sun, fully actualized personhood.

The self-help movement sometimes gives the impression that its recommendations are separate from spiritual practices. Spiritually oriented books might propose the reverse. In this book we look for ways to bring the two together: psychological health and spiritual consciousness. But we won't stop there. Our work-practice escorts us to a third splendid possibility: becoming a saint, which is attainable by everyone and everyone's highest life fulfillment.

The meaning and purpose of sanity, spirituality, and sanctity keep evolving. The definition of an elbow has remained the same throughout the centuries because it is what it is, no matter what is happening socially or politically. But the definitions of sanity, spirituality, and sanctity change over time since they are directly influenced by what is happening in the world. All three, unlike an elbow, are *interactive*, directly influenced by contemporary issues and necessarily responsive to society's needs. In the twenty-first century, our world is more tightly interconnected than ever. Environmental concerns, societal issues, and the political scene are crucial to the design and maintenance of our mental health, our spirituality, and the shape of our saintly calling. Thus, social consciousness and social action are important themes throughout this book as we describe what it takes today to be sane, spiritual, and saintly.

The good news is that sanity, spirituality, and sanctity have a play-book. Each of the three has a specific set of practices that actualize them. We will explore these practices individually and discover how to weave them into our daily life, work, feelings, and sense of who we really are and why we are here.

We see psychological *sanity* as a *foundation* and *spirituality* as a *bridge*. They are not the complete story of wholeness. Sanity is a beginning.

Spirituality is a conduit. Neither one nor both constitute the completion of a life of wholeness. Neither can go far enough as we come to see sanctity as our ultimate goal. Sanctity is our full aliveness, personal fulfillment, the divine completion of a human life, the presence of holiness on earth. Our challenge is to integrate not two but three resplendent trails to humanness.

All three options remain choices that are being offered to us. Some people choose to go no further than psychological health. Some people deny that there is a spiritual or saintly dimension at all, while others may focus on spiritual practices and neglect mental health concerns. Some people focus on both. We can do what psychology recommends and become truly healthy. We can engage in spiritual practices and grow in transcendent ways. But we can also combine union with the divine, heroic giving, dedicated focus, and full openness to grace—and thereby journey toward sanctity.

Sanctity is not limited to famous people like Joan of Arc or Archbishop Oscar Romero. The single mother who cares so single-mindedly for her children is certainly a saintly heroine. Saintly heroism refers to selfless love, dedicated service, bold courage, heart-centered focus, and willingness to risk one's safety and security. It includes a turning from ego-centeredness to social consciousness, universal love, and unlimited caring. We need not be daunted by the bigness of this enterprise. We can firmly trust that we do not hear a call without being given sufficient graces for fulfilling it. This is how sanctity is a synchronous blend of abundant love that we keep showing and boundless grace that we keep receiving. Grace is the gift dimension of life, available in all three stages of our growth.

Spirituality and holiness both flourish optimally in an atmosphere of psychological health. Likewise, wholeness happens best in the context of a life of goodness with a commitment to co-create a world of justice, peace, and love—our spiritual goals. Holiness happens in those special times when we soar beyond psychological health and spiritual wholesomeness. We are given the grace to go over the top in

our virtue, over and above what is required, above and beyond what is expected, past spiritual practices, beyond the call of duty. We embrace the unrequired extra that makes us saints: we love in daring ways; we access wisdom beyond ordinary knowledge; we usher healing, even miracles, into our world. From the Christian perspective, such a world is the kingdom of God, the completion of all things in Christ.

Every human person, with or without religion, can walk through this sacred door since sanctity can happen in myriad ways. We can be big saints or little saints: We can say yes to moments of saintliness, internally or externally, and that may be enough. We can say yes to a lifetime of sanctity, and that will be more than enough. Each person is called to sanctity, but the spectrum is wide—as wide as human nature itself. One saintly act is all it takes for success.

None of the three goals is expected to be fulfilled all the time. No one is sane, spiritual, and saintly every minute of the day. Our daily expectations of ourselves are appropriate when they are “good enough”:

We are sane almost all the time.

We are spiritual most of the time.

We are saintly from time to time.

Let’s consider the origin of some of these words. “Sanity” is from the Latin *sanus*, which means health, soundness of body and mind. “Spirituality” is from the Latin *spiritalis* for “breathing,” since an empowering Spirit breathes through us, lives in us, acts through us. “Sanctity” is from the Latin *sanctus*, meaning holy or sacred. For Christians, saints manifest the sacred indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, the divine energy of wisdom and love, the *experience* of the sacred. “Wholeness” and “holiness” derive from German and Dutch words with similar meanings: unimpaired, thorough, full, and integral.

All three levels of our development—sanity, spirituality, and sanctity—work in concert. Throughout this book we focus on the three

elements and show how to bring them together. No one of them interferes with any other.

Let's use the example of healthy assertiveness to see how the three goals interflow. Our psychological work shows us how to ask for what we want, express our needs, and protect our boundaries. When we bring a spiritual consciousness to those goals we also ask for societal justice, speak up about injustice, and take a stand to protect others as equal in value to ourselves. In saintliness, we put ourselves on the line as we do this. We extend our caring compassion without stint or limit. We put ourselves second, if to do so will be vital to someone else's survival. We speak truth to power even when it may land us in big trouble.

Sanity, spirituality, and sanctity all include both consciousness and practice, awareness and action:

- When we are *psychologically healthy*, we are aware of ourselves, our feelings, our talents, our limitations. We then make wise choices that help us fulfill our personal goals and contribute to the world around us. It is up to us to nurture this process. When we do, we feel wholesome—body, heart, and mind. Sanity is goal-oriented. A goal is a purpose we strive to fulfill so that our lives can be satisfactory.
- When we are *spiritually vibrant* we are aware of the transcendent radiance in the universe and engage in actions that promote its conscious evolution. Spirituality is dedicated to a unique destiny, something more than a goal. It is the fulfillment of our life purpose. In this book, the word “destiny” does not mean predetermined or fated. It refers to the unfolding of our full capacity for humanness.
- When we are *saintly* we are aware of the presence of God in all things and in every moment. We then take every opportunity to act in accord with the divine resolve to co-create an evolved

world. We are thoroughly convinced that everything is holy. In this book, we use the word “God” in a nondual way. God is the wholeness-holiness in us and in all things.

One does not have to be a traditional believer or member of a church to be a saint. We might, for instance, still be on board for sanctity when we say, “I don’t know if there is a God but I want to act as if there were a God and as if this God were love.”

Each of the three goals of a fully human life—sanity, spirituality, and sanctity—places a uniquely thrilling spin on our sense of ourselves:

- When we are sound in body and mind, our sense of ourselves is unreserved self-esteem. We are self-confident and secure. We can step up to the plate when curveballs are pitched our way. We maintain equanimity in the midst of chaos. We still appreciate and seek validation from others but now we self-validate more often.
- When we are spiritually oriented, our sense of ourselves is expanded consciousness. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, in *The Human Phenomenon*, describes it best when he states that we have “ever more perfect eyes at the heart of a cosmos where it is always possible to discern more.”<sup>1</sup> Our sense of self spiritually is also responsiveness to our unique calling to make the world more just and peaceful than it is now—to make ourselves more loving than we have been yet.
- As saints, our sense of ourselves is total gratitude for the graces we receive and total willingness to embrace the heroic challenges the world keeps tossing in our direction. This includes a sense of ordination to a holy calling: “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Human Phenomenon: A New Edition and Translation of Le phenomene humain*, trans. Sarah Appleton-Weber (East Sussex, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2003), 3.

may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9).

Thus, our progress in any of the three S’s does not rely only on our actions. Something in us is contributing to making full human-ness happen. Carl Jung, in “Concerning Mandala Symbolism,” states it clearly: “There is in the psyche a process that seeks its own goal no matter what the external factors may be . . . the almost irresistible compulsion and urge to become what one is.”<sup>2</sup>

Aristotle used the word “entelechy” to refer to this inner life force in every being to grow up into what it really is. An instinctive energy within us directs the growth of our body-minds to actualize the full breadth of our identity. We aren’t becoming herons; we are becoming full-on humans. We are becoming by natural predisposition what we have the capacity to be. Our human entelechy is an ineradicable, irrepressible arc in the direction of all the rainbow colors of self-emergence: sanity, spirituality, and sanctity.

This stunning power is the foundation of our trust in our bodies, minds, emotions, and spirit. Something alive inside is infallibly oriented to full self-emergence. We align ourselves with the entelechy of sanity when we make healthy choices. We align spiritually when we go beyond our apparent limits into the transcendent. We align in holiness when we live in harmony with the voice and movements of the indwelling Spirit.

When we see someone in trouble and have only psychology to help us make sense of it we might say, “That’s happening over there, and I am over here.” This may be safety-making, but it is also separation-making. This is a minimum opening of our entelechy. In spiritual awareness and commitment we ask what the Good Samaritan might ask: “How am I part of this suffering, and how can I be a force of healing?” In saintliness, we see someone suffering and we do not say,

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<sup>2</sup> Carl G. Jung, “Concerning Mandala Symbolism,” in *Mandala Symbolism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962), 73.



“There but for the grace of God go I.” We say, “There by the grace of God go I.” Our compassion flows from irresistible communion—the ultimate and full expression of our human entelechy as a deep *kinship*. Father Greg Boyle, SJ, wrote about kinship as “not serving the other, but being one with the other. . . . Jesus was not ‘a man for others’; he was one with them. There is a world of difference in that.”<sup>3</sup>

In this book we take a three-step journey, however gingerly, to psychological soundness, spiritual wholeness, and saintly holiness. They form the mystical rose of three petals all unfolded, the gift of wholeness and holiness at the end and all throughout our human journey.

In any here and now, we can check in with ourselves about our three spectacular human enterprises. As a daily practice, we can also ask ourselves three questions. The first is about sanity, the second about spirituality, the third about sanctity:

- What opportunity do I have today to be healthy, both physically and psychologically? What opportunity do I have to be healthy, both physically and psychologically, in this very moment?
- What spiritual destiny can I give myself to today? What is the door, the on-ramp I see before me in this moment?
- What graces of wisdom and daring action can I take advantage of today? What love in my heart is opening now so that I can be a channel of grace?

We ask for this reliable grace now as we embark upon our marvel-filled pilgrimage to no fewer than three shrines: sanity, spirituality, and sanctity. They will appear together as the one destination of the Camino of this lifetime. Indeed, they show us why we have been given a lifetime.

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<sup>3</sup> Greg Boyle, SJ, *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 72.