

## Rebecca Credo Statement

My Aunt Mabel is a very wise woman. She maintains that the key to a good and happy existence is to get out of the middle of your own life. By this she means focusing your time, attention, and activities on things outside of yourself – other people, other pursuits and passions.

While people exhibit varying degrees of self-absorption and self-centeredness, they are almost all good at their core in my experience.

There are psychopaths amongst us – people who arrive damaged or become so from life traumas, but we pretty much arrive good but with a nagging tendency to lapse into self-indulgence.

There was a movie many years ago called *The Conversation*. What it was about is not important here, but there was a scene in which a man and a woman are walking through a park and the woman sees a homeless man sleeping on a park bench and says, “And think, he was once somebody’s beautiful baby boy.” We were all beautiful babies once, and I believe we continue to carry that beautiful baby loveable-ness with us always. If there is a God that loves us, it’s the beautiful baby part that He sees and loves, -- call it grace if you like -- and there is something about that beauty that thrives in relationship to others.

But about that self-indulgence part. It pulls very hard, and it separates us from our best selves. Call it sin; call it original sin even. It is when we live shallowly for ourselves that we become broken and separated from our best selves. In short, we are too solidly in the middle of our own lives crowding out caring for others, passion for learning, passion for creating – whatever it is that connects us to each other and the larger creation. We are running on a hamster wheel of feeding our own egos, getting lost in our own insecurities, and chasing superficial “need-its”.

Here is the Jeremiad portion of the morning. I believe a lot of what ails us spiritually is that we are engulfed in a constant fog of consumerism that constantly drags us back to the center of our lives – where we don’t belong. Think about how many times a day we hear messages of have this, buy this, look like this – messages that are all about ME. It infects the relationships that should be nurturing us by intruding with messages of “*me*” inviting each of us to imagine how wonderful *I* will feel basking in the love and admiration of *my* family after *I* buy them this pizza or clean the floor with this cleaner, how *my* wife will look at *me* so lovingly after *I* buy her a diamond necklace. Think about how few times a day we hear messages of service to others – calls to feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick – the activities that reunite us with our better selves.

This consumerism is part of the Faustian bargain with Capitalism that has brought us plenty and comfort, and by the way provided us with the riches to alleviate the world's suffering if only we chose to. Yet, it is sapping our capacity as individuals to create whole and healthy lives and as a society to do just about anything collectively.

I believe we have the means of salvation readily at hand as a society and as individuals. For us as individuals it is in living less like the Housewives of Fill-in-the-Blank and more like my wise Aunt Mabel by always taking every opportunity to get out of the middle of our own lives.

