

“A MONKEY BUSINESS”

*Excerpts from the book” The Foundry Worker and the Gardener”
of Fr. P. Ribes, s.j. published by the Gujarat Sashitya Prakash.*

Intent of The Story

- ✓ *To learn how to genuinely help others.*
- ✓ *To avoid being a rescuer.*
- ✓ *Don't play the redeemer's game.*
- ✓ *Don't be better than what you are.*
- ✓ *To discover the difference between helping and rescuing operations.*
- ✓ *To be aware of our resentments while helping others.*
- ✓ *To discover why, occasionally, we feel angry and resentful towards those who love us.*

“A MONKEY BUSINESS” (The Parable)

Narrator: Mr. Rane came home one day tired and weary carrying a big monkey comfortably seated on his back. Mrs. Rane was very, very upset to see her husband in such a sorry state. With great concern and anxiety she enquired of Mr. Rane.

Mrs. Rane: Darling, what's wrong with you? How is it that you look so haggard, weary and depressed? Tell me what happened?

Mr. Rane: To tell the truth, I am tired and fed up of your mother, brothers and sisters. All my in-laws are sitting on my back! They give me no end of trouble. Every time I go to their homes, I have to hear the same tirade: “You, good for nothing...a waster....a drunkard...unfit to be a father...unworthy husband. Shame upon you! Shame! Shame! Shame!”

Mrs. Rane: What is this I hear, honey? No, no, you are the best husband in the world! You are sweet and loving. Do not listen to all this crap of theirs. I'll settle them for you! They will have to listen to me even if they do not like it. I'll tell them a few home truths that will make them squirm. Now, dear, forget all about it. Rest, enjoy and relax!

Narrator: And with that, Mrs. Rane took that big monkey off her husband's back and placed it on her shoulders. Mr. Rane felt a great relief...He was happy again, relaxed and free...He went to the joint-club to drink and play cards with his friends. The same day Anil, the little son of the Ranes' came home from school with a little monkey perched on his back. Mrs. Rane, with great solicitude and tenderness spoke to Anil:

Mrs.Rane: Anil dear, what happened to you today in school?**Anil:** Mum, you know? There was a lot of trouble in school today. My class teacher punished me for no reason at all. She told me that I am sly and crooked

Mrs. Rane: O dear, dear, how bad of her! I'll come to school tomorrow and tell her what I think about her. Imagine calling my sweet little boy sly and crooked! Who does she think she is? Now Anil, dear, forget all about it. Be happy and enjoy yourself.

Narrator: With that Mrs. Rane took that little monkey off Anil's back and kept it on her back. Anil was very happy...he felt a great relief. He forgot all about what happened in school...and he went to play with his friends. The same day, Anita, their daughter, came from her friend's birthday party shedding tears. She looked very sad and gloomy. She too was carrying a little monkey on her back.

Mrs. Rane: O Sugar! What's this I see? Pray, tell me, what happened? What's wrong with my darling today?

Anita: Mum, you know, at the party there were lots of quarrels. They made fun of me. They called me 'Sissy' and 'mummy's darling'. They made me cry!

Mrs. Rane: Do not cry, child! No! No! You are not a 'sissy'. You are good. You are not just 'mummy's darling'. You are 'everybody's darling'! You are the sweetest and cutest little girl I have ever seen! How nasty and bad of those children to make you cry and call you names! Now, forget about it. I'll let their parents know how they behaved with you. I'll teach them a lesson or two on how they should bring up their children. Change now, eat, have a bath, go and play.

Narrator: With that, Mrs. Rane took the little monkey off Anita's back and sat it on her own. Anita felt very relieved...She was happy again. She forgot all about the happenings at the birthday party and went to play with her friends. Two days later, Anil came back home and told her that he had signed up to play for the forthcoming the Inter-school Jockey Tournament. He pleaded with her to take him thrice a week to the Coronation Grounds for coaching practices. She replied:

Mrs. Rane: My dear, the Coronation Grounds are far away. I have lots of work to do at home. It's going to be very difficult for me to take you there. Kindly, spare me the trouble. But Anil pleaded with her:

Anil: Mum, you always have been so good to me, you cannot say "no" now to me when I need your help. Please, do not let me down. You have to take me there!

Mrs. Rane: Alright, darling, Just to show you how much I love you. I'll take you there.

Narrator: Anita came back all upset from school. She bewailed:

Anita: Mum, the Geography Teacher has given us lots of maps to draw up during these coming holidays. I can't do all this crap. Why should I spoil my holidays? I want to play and enjoy.

Mr. Rane: Do not cry darling, though I am busy, I'll draw those maps for you. I do not want anyone to spoil your holidays, much less this stupid teacher.

Narrator: Neighbors use to day: Mrs. Rane is a loving and wonderful lady. She is so obliging. She lives only for her children and husband! Yes, husband and children kept coming with monkeys on their backs. Some monkeys were big, others small....some mild, others snappy....some decent-looking, others ugly... She always helped them. She kept taking her husband's and children's monkeys off their backs and sat them on her own. All at home felt relieved, light-hearted, trouble free

As the days rolled by...something began to come over Mrs.Rane...she was feeling increasingly angry, sad, weary and, strange to say, resentful, even spiteful towards her husband and children. In spite of being so good and helpful, she could not find joy in her daily life. She was feeling depressed and unable to cope with her role as wife and mother

One day, when she felt particularly desperate, groaning and moaning she met a good friend of hers. Seeing the pallor in her face, the far away look in her eyes and the droop of her shoulders, Mrs. Rane's friend was taken aback. She asked her:

Friend: Mrs. Rane, what's the matter with you today? You look so low, so depressed and dispirited. Are you sick?

Mrs. Rane: How can I be happy? Every day, my husband and my children, come to me and unload their monkeys on my back! One and all, expect me to carry their burdens. I feel misused and taken advantage of! Can they not see that I am feeling crushed and nearly paralyzed? I cannot cope any longer....There is no strength left in me...I do not wish to live any more! Can you please help me carry some of those monkeys? By taking some of them on your back, you will make my burden lighter. Please, please, I beg from you! Help me!

Friend: No! Not all! I'll never take any of those monkeys on my back. Why should I? They are not mine. Why should I carry them? You volunteered to take those creatures on your back, right? Well, now you bear the burden yourself! Wailing or blaming others is not the right solution to your problem.

Mrs. Rane: Is there, then a solution to my plight? Please, tell me!

Friend: Yes, Mrs. Rane, surely, there is a solution! And the solution is very simple! But it is only you, not I, or anybody else who can apply the remedy! Listen to me. Send those monkeys away from your back to where they belong! To begin with, they are neither yours, nor mine! Why should you or I carry them on our backs? To each, his own monkey! **That's a monkey business! Get these creatures off your back and place them just now on the backs of those to whom they belong!**

Narrator: Mrs. Rane followed her friend's advice. Peremptorily she sent all the monkeys away from her back by placing them on the backs of those to whom they belonged. From then on, Mrs. Rane's true life began! She felt light-hearted, happy and

satisfied at home. **And strangely enough, from then on, she felt better fit to help her husband and children to cope with their monkeys and to be a happier mother and wife.**

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. Why did everybody go to her for help?
2. What was her attitude towards her family members? Describe.
3. By helping her children and husband in the way she did, did she really help or rather harm them? Explain.
4. What might be the motives or reasons, conscious and unconscious ones, prompting her to be so very helpful?
5. Can you apply this story to real situations you experienced at home, in school, community, parish, neighborhood, places of work, etc.? Describe them.
6. Have you met persons like Mrs. Rane in your life? How did you feel towards them?
7. Why Mrs. Rane, in spite of being so helpful and good to all, felt depressed, angry and resentful?
8. Why did she end by blaming those whom she helped for her weariness and unhappiness?
9. Are there any similarities between Mrs. Rane's behavior and yours? Which?
10. Have you ever felt resentful of people who loved you and tried to help you – may be, your parents, teachers, superiors, and friends? Why should it be so? Find reasons:
11. Did you ever feel resentful towards people whom you truly loved and sincerely tried to help - your pupils and students, family members, friends, patients, people in need, etc.? When? Why? What could the reason be?
12. How can we really help those, whom we love, like our pupils, family members, parishioners, members of your religious community, those entrusted to our care, etc.? Explain.
13. Have you any other comments or insights to share?

INPUT: Ideas Helpful for an Input and Personal Reflection.

A) Helping Vs Rescuing

There is a world of difference between 'helping' and 'rescuing'

'Helping' means giving assistance to a person

- Who is in need,
- Who cannot help himself
- Who wants to be helped

'Rescuing' means any of these three things

- Helping a person who can help himself.
- Helping a person who needs help, but who does not want it.
- Not giving advice or correction to a person who is under care and who needs it just to spare him/her – rather rescue him/her - from the pain he may feel by the confrontation that may ensure.

B) Adverse Consequences of Rescuing Operations.

- ✓ Any rescuing operation prevents the person helped from growing.
- ✓ Helping generates gratefulness and confidence – rescuing breeds resentment, anger and hostility
- ✓ Helping brings joy, peace and a feeling of acceptance to the helper. Rescuing on the contrary, will finally cause sadness, depression, and a feeling of rejection to the rescuer.
- ✓ By helping others, we reach out to them with unselfish love – strangely enough, by rescuing others, we actually help ourselves. In more than one way, consciously or unconsciously, we satisfy some needs of ours.
- ✓ By helping we do not impinge on others' freedom – by rescuing, we put constraints on others' freedom.
- ✓ By helping others, we let others grow – by rescuing others we stifle their growth.
- ✓ By helping we enhance their self-image and boost up their ego – by rescuing we inflate our own ego. . .
- ✓ By helping we trust others – by rescuing we distrust them.
- ✓ By helping we allow others to be themselves – by rescuing, we try to make others what we want them to be.
- ✓ By helping we show courage and confidence in ourselves – by rescuing we show that we are afraid of others.
- ✓ By helping we encourage others to stand on their own feet - by rescuing we make them dependent on us.
- ✓ By helping we show that we are honest – by rescuing we betray our dishonesty.
- ✓ By helping we show readiness to face conflict – by rescuing we run away from conflict and confrontation.
- ✓ When a person is being rescued, in the long run, he feels forced, constrained, manipulated, distrusted, bossed, discounted, misunderstood, impotent....As a result: he feels resentful, angry, hurt, and hostile.

Check Carefully: Feelings speak louder than words!

Resentments, anger, hostility and negative emotional responses tell us that - rightly or wrongly - we perceive that some of our needs and wants are unsatisfied, thwarted or taken advantage of.

Therefore:

1. If you sense that those you love and you try to help –(*your children, your spouse, your pupils, your trainees, etc.*)- harbor negative feelings towards you, better watch out! In all likelihood, you are not a helper, but a rescuer!
2. If you experience negative feelings towards those who love you (–*parents, teachers, priests, friends, etc.* -) be sure that consciously or unconsciously, they are trying to rescuing you! In that case, assertively but lovingly, confront them. Do not allow yourself to be manipulated into being what they want you to be or what they think you ought to be or into fulfilling their expectations of you!
3. If you ever feel – rightly or wrongly - that your freedom, your self image, your very self is in danger, better put matters right! Immediately, confront others in **an assertive and loving manner!** Do not rescue yourself and your dear ones from the

pains of confrontation and conflict. **Do not take things lying down! In the process, both, you and others, will gain and grow.**

C) Why Rescuing Operations are so Common;

- ✓ Over- protectiveness
- ✓ Fear of losing the love of those we love.
- ✓ Possessiveness.
- ✓ Manipulative tendencies.
- ✓ False pity for others. We cannot bear to see them suffer.
- ✓ Fear of conflict and confrontation.
- ✓ Lack of self-confidence
- ✓ Distrust of others.
- ✓ Discounting your strength and the capacity of others for growth and human relationships.
- ✓ Superiority complex, like 'I know better'.
- ✓ Paternalism, 'maternal, protectionist attitudes. Strong nurturing parent.
- ✓ Inflated sense of responsibility for those under our care.
- ✓ An exaggerated and compulsive desire to help others.
- ✓ Unconscious need to improve our self image.
- ✓ Trying to make people measure up to our own expectations.
- ✓ Playing the role of the 'nice guy'.
- ✓ Perfectionist tendencies.
- ✓ Inability to say 'NO'.
- ✓ Compulsive moral conscience: 'Ought – "should – musts - -haves" ;
- ✓ Legalism, i.e. "Things and people have to conform the law"
- ✓ A 'pathological' moral righteousness. 'I am O.K.' You are not "O.K
- ✓ Interfering, meddling in others' lives.
- ✓ Inability to give and to receive negative feedback.
- ✓ Preventing people from suffering and from learning the hard way.
- ✓ Not allowing others to learn by making mistakes.
- ✓ Self-importance and condescending attitude towards others.

D) Remedies: How to avoid 'rescuing operations'.

- ✓ Love people as they are.
- ✓ Offer help, but do not force it on them.
- ✓ Be always available but never obtrusive.
- ✓ Treat others as free and mature human beings.
- ✓ Do not feel that you have the duty to solve 'everybody's problems'.
- ✓ Do not be afraid of proper conflict and confrontation.
- ✓ Allow people, even those you love, to learn and grow through suffering.
- ✓ Allow people to make mistakes. .
- ✓ Always give others your support and acceptance, not your advice!
- ✓ Allow people freedom to be themselves.
- ✓ Do not make things too easy for those under your charge.

- ✓ Let others solve their problems and conflicts as much as they can by themselves
- ✓ Do not give unsolicited or unwanted help.
- ✓ Express honestly your feelings both positive and negative.
- ✓ Do not allow your resentments grow and get the better of you. Express them soon,
- ✓ Stop sermonizing, moralizing and ‘preaching’.
- ✓ Do not try to be better than you are! “To yourself be true”!
- ✓ Assert your rights; else you will lose them by default.
- ✓ Do not feel obliged to live up to others’ expectations.
- ✓ Do not say ‘YES’ when you want to say “NO”
- ✓ Do not help others under compulsion. .
- ✓ Help others only because you love them.
- ✓ Do not help others because you are afraid to disappoint them if you say no.
- ✓ Never help others with ulterior motives or with the hope of returns.
- ✓ Avoid all sorts of manipulations.
- ✓ Remember: **‘Helping means helping and nothing else’**.
- ✓ Do not get disappointed and depressed if your help is not accepted.
- ✓ Never congratulate yourself for the good done to others.
- ✓ Discern carefully whether in satisfying the needs of others, you are not ‘unconsciously’ satisfying yours!
- ✓ Never remind others of the help you gave them in the past.
- ✓ Do not make people feel obligated to you for help rendered.
- ✓ Do not create guilt for favors not returned.

In sum: NEVER CARRY OTHERS’ MONKEYS ON YOUR BACK. We have enough monkeys of our own! HELP THEM CARRY THEIRS. To each one his Monkeys!

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NOTE: To assist you to conduct meaningful events on how to help others, we offer here below four appendixes.

APPENDIX ONE: Points for Personal Reflection and Action

A) After a short period of silent prayer, ask the audience to reflect on some of these points:

1. In my with my children, pupils and those under me, am I a ‘helper’ or, rather, a ‘rescuer’?
2. After I helped them to help themselves, do I let them free to solve their problems?
3. Do I offer help, when others do not want it?
4. Am I, with the best of intentions, rather meddlesome and obtrusive?
5. Can I accept and love my kids and pupils and those under my care as they are?
6. Do I feel comfortable with their shortcomings and foibles?
7. Am I paternalistic, over-protective or overbearing?

8. Do I feel responsible, even for the mistakes and shortcomings of my children and those under my care?
9. Can I, politely say “NO” to them without regrets whenever necessary?
10. Can I give negative feed-back them, in the proper way, when needed?
11. Am I so afraid of conflict and confrontation that I do not dare share openly, yet respectfully, my true feelings towards others?
12. Can I assert my rights before my charges even when they may not like it?
13. Do I respect their rights as much as I want mine to be respected?
14. When I help those whom I am educating do I have ulterior motives, like forcing them to live up to my expectations or to impose my authority on them, to feel important, to inflate my ego and so on?

B) Ask the audience to beg from God for light and inspiration. After that they may put down in writing their reflections and resolutions for future reference and action:

Point 1. _____

Point 2. _____

Point 3. _____

Point 4. _____

APPENDIX TWO; JESUS THE PERFECT HELPER.

BIBLE STUDY AND PRAYER EXERCISE.

Quotes from the N.T. on Jesus as an Example of A Good Helper .

Comment on the way Jesus helped people. He was never obtrusive, nor rescuing others. He did not even cure anyone without their express request. He did not force his help on anyone

A) Helps and cures:

- 1) Mt. 8: 1-3 Curing a leper: “Sir, if you want, you can cure me.” “I do want,” replied Jesus.
- 2) Mt. 8:5-13 Jesus heals the Roman Officer’s servant.
- 3) Mt. 8:23-27 Jesus calms the storm.
- 4) Mt. 9:1-8 Jesus cures the paralyzed man.
- 5) Mt. 9:27-31 Jesus cures two blind men.
- 6) Mt. 15:21-28 Jesus cures the daughter of the Canaanite woman.
- 7) Mk. 10:46-52 Jesus cures Barthimaeus.
- 8) Mk 5:25-34 Jesus cures the woman with a flow of blood.
- 9) Mk 9:14-29 Jesus cures a boy with an evil spirit.
- 10) Jn 5:1-8 Healing at the Pool.
- 14) Jn 11:1-44 The resurrection of Lazarus.

B) Advice Was Given but never Forced on Others.

Mk 10:17-31	Invitation. No force. 'If you wish to be perfect '.
Lk 19:1-9	Zacchaeus. No force, only invitation.
Jn 4:3-32	The Samaritan Woman. No force. Acceptance Mary Magdalene. Pardon and support.
Mt 9/9-13	Mathew's Call. Jesus just invited him.
Mk 10/17-23	The Rich Young Man. Jesus called him yet he let him free to heed or not to heed the call.
Lk 9/57-62	The Would-be Disciples of Jesus. It was just a call. He did not bring pressure on them.
Mk 5/13-19	General call to all men. If you wish to be my disciples"...

C) Correction Given with Love and Respect

Mk 10/35-45	John and James asking to be the top persons in his Kingdom.
Lk22/24-27	Disciples quarreling about who of them was the greatest..
Jn 21/15-19	Jesus meets Peter after the denial.
Sermon f the Mount:	Chapters 5 & 6. It was a forceful teaching without forcing us. The Sermon of the Mount" is a master piece of 'non-rescuing" preaching.
Jn 20/24-29	Jesus rebukes doubting Thomas
Lk 24/13-35	Disciples of Emmaus. A master- piece in correction.

HINTS FOR PERSONAL OR GROUP PRAYER:

Based on the N.T. quotes above, the audience may be lead through a personal or group prayer and contemplation on the way Jesus dealt with people.

APPENDIX THREE; Roleplays.

Examples of Common Rescuing Situations.

***NOTE:** The audience may volunteer to present in a role-play fashion any of the typical rescuing cases suggested below. Allow them unfettered freedom. Do not rescue them! After each role-play, a short evaluation and critique of the it, may prove illustrative*

(1) **The overprotective Mother:**

She wants to 'rescue' her children from all hurts and dangers.

(2) **The Overzealous Nun**

She wants to 'rescue' her girl students from all moral dangers

(3) **The Dedicated Social Worker:**

He/she works in the slums. He wants to rescue people from all hardships. He kills himself for the people. **He does everything for them, not with them.** In the end, the people reject him! He feels brokenhearted

4) **The Good Guy:**

He always says 'yes' to his neighbors asking for favors. He ends feeling resentful, made used of, and blames others for not cooperating with him.

He wants to please everybody, in the end displeases all.

(5) **The Over Responsible Superior:**

He/she feels responsible for all the problems, mistakes and conflicts arising among the members his/her community. He tries to solve everybody's problems and rescue them from conflicts and confrontations. In the end, he lands in the soup

APPENDIX FOUR: CASE STUDIES.

CASE ONE:

Nancy is a very dutiful mother. She brought up a large family. She killed herself for her children. She gave them always the best of food, clothing, education, etc. without counting the cost at great personal sacrifice. Now, she is sour because her children do not measure up to her expectations. One day she blasted at them: "You are most ungrateful children! I killed myself for you and deprived myself of everything. I gave up for sake good food, clothes, friends and social life. And now, you are so indifferent towards me and so disobedient! I feel let down! Her older daughters replied: "Mum, did we ask you to kill yourself for us? Why are you now so grumpy and angry?"

Questions:

- ✓ What's the problem with Nancy?
- ✓ What has happened to her in relation with her daughters?
- ✓ Was Nancy justified to rebuke her children as she did? Why?
- ✓ Was her elder daughter right or wrong in the way she replied to her mum? Why?
- ✓ Were her children really ungrateful? Why?
- ✓ What should Nancy do from then on?

CASE TWO:

Every time, the Students/Brothers/Sisters leave the conference room, they keep the lights and the fans on and the windows open.

Not to confront them, their teacher puts the lights and the fans off and closes the windows before h/she leaves the classroom. He/she feels quite bad about it. Often enough he complains about them to their Principal/Superior.

Questions:

- ✓ Is the teacher doing the proper thing by taking the unwanted work upon him/her and then complain to the Superior? Why?
- ✓ Is he/she justified to feel annoyed with the students? Why?
- ✓ Has he/she any right to complain to the Principal? Why?
- ✓ What should he/she have done?
- ✓ In what event would he/she be justified to complain to higher authority? Explain.

CASE THREE

Tony, a 9th STD student, spends long hours watching T.V. His mum, to help him not to waste time and study well, gave the T.V.set away. Tony is furious with his mum. To take his revenge, he vowed not to study at all.

Questions:

- ✓ Did mum really help Tony by giving the T.V. set away? Why?
- ✓ Could Tony have been “helped” in a better way by his Mum? How?
- ✓ Was Tony right at being mad at his mum?
- ✓ Was Tony right by vowing not to study at all? Why?
- ✓ If you were Tony what would you have done?

CASE FOUR

Mary, a very clever girl, neglects her lessons. She is capable of doing very well all by herself. Her disgruntled mum, however, to help her to secure high marks sits, at night, for long hours with her. In this way she fared very well in her exams.

Questions:

- ✓ Did mum really help Mary? Why?
- ✓ Were you in Mary’s place, how would you feel towards Mum?
- ✓ Will she, later on, feel grateful to her Mum for the pains she took for her? Why?
- ✓ How will Mary’s Mum really feel within herself about Mary’s behavior? Why?
- ✓ What should Mum have done? What would you have done?

