

Stupid Indemnity = Indumbnity

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Indemnity is a word that is familiar to most of us old Moonies, ahem scuse me, Unificationists. Usually it means something like paying sincerely to make up for past sins or failings, whether it's our own, our ancestors' or just everybody's. It's an offering to restore a relationship into harmony.

So far so good. But the easier and simpler idea we got was that any kind of suffering is indemnity. This idea of indemnity tries to glorify mistakes, failures, pointless suffering and plain stubborn dumb behavior. Some examples: brothers cleaning an office find a pot with nothing green in it. Not knowing what it is, they throw out the bookkeeper's amaryllis bulb, that makes beautiful flowers every spring. "You threw out my flower! Why didn't you ask me?" "Oh, that's just indemnity."

Similarly, when our IOWC team was driving to New Mexico from Texas, we were switching drivers every hour at night. One brother insisted he could keep driving and didn't switch, then 20 minutes later skidded the van he was driving to a dramatic halt, holding up the convoy. Asked him what he was doing, he said "Challenge!" dramatically. The old MFT spirit. Challenge himself to stay awake while driving 8 brothers and sisters on a winding mountain highway in the middle of the night.

This, I think, qualifies as indumbnity.

I heard another brother (I am using no names here, except mine) tell a dramatic story recently of how he got a throat infection, and kept on going hour after hour, day after day as the pain got worse until he had to be taken to the hospital screaming in pain. He seemed proud of how he had 'challenged his physical limitations', which is something we were taught to do as part of our spiritual practice. But here, he ended up in the hospital for a while when he could have just gone to see a doctor and taken some medicine. I wanted to scream "You have a wife and a child. Why are you proud of almost killing yourself? Do you think they don't need you around? Will they be proud and happy that you did your job for two more days and then died?" This kind of action, in my opinion, deserves an indumbnity medal.

Now, I am telling you this because this last story was on my mind recently. I had the flu almost three weeks ago, and I still have sinus congestion and sore throat, cough, etc. I've been wondering if I should go see a doctor, but part of me kept saying "It's just the flu, it'll get better. I can tough it out." Now at the same time, I find myself remembering this brother's story about how proud he was to challenge himself until he was in the hospital. When I remembered it, I wanted to call him up right then and yell at him.

But then I wondered, 'Maybe this story is a message for me, not for him', and sure enough, after I put off going to the doctor yet one more day, I now have boogers coming out of my left eyeball as well as from my nose and throat. And I have endured a couple weeks of feeling lousy and resting a lot, not being able to do much for my family. Indumbnity for sure.

Seeing my doctor tomorrow.

Do you have any indumbnity stories? I invite you to share them. Please try to be kind to all concerned, and try to avoid turning this into an outrage and resentment session. I know there have been a lot of painful experiences in the past, just tell us what happened without trying to tell us how to feel about it. The people I wrote about here are brothers I admire and love, who have done some amazingly brave things and some stupid things... like me, like all of us.