

Loving the earth and loving ourselves

The following text is the second in a three-installment series from a talk given to participants at the 1990 annual meeting of the B.C. Museum Association, given by Father Charles Brandt of Campbell River.

SPALDING'S ARTICLE

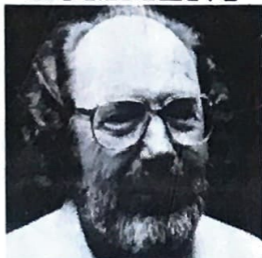
In the June/July issue of *Museum Roundup*, David Spalding in his article, *How Green Is Your Museum*, outlines very well in some detail what museums have been doing and can do to speed along the environmental movement. This article is full of practical suggestions, and I recommend it highly for your study and practice. One thing he does not mention is the use of acid-free paper for the publication of pamphlets and permanent records of our institutions.

GIVE INFORMATION:

Many activists who rouse us to the fact that our survival is at stake decry public apathy. They often assume, mistakenly, that people do not change because they lack information and that the main job of activists is to provide that missing information. But the experience of despair suggests that such numbness and apathy does not stem from ignorance or indifference. On the contrary, most of us are aware of the destruction of our planet at the deepest level. But we do not face it, do not integrate it for fear of experiencing the despair that such information provokes. We fear it may overwhelm us.

Erich Fromm writes: "The doctrine that love for oneself is identical with selfishness and an alternative to love for others has pervaded theology, philosophy, and popular thought; the same doctrine has been rationalized in scientific language in Freud's theory of narcissism. Freud's concept presupposes a fixed amount of libido. In the infant, all of the libido has the child's own person as its objective, the state of primary narcissism as Freud calls it. During the individual's development, the libido is shifted from one's own person toward other objects. If a person is blocked in his object-relationships the libido is withdrawn from the objects and returned to his or her own person; this is called second-

COMMENT



By Father
Charles Brandt

dary narcissism. According to Freud, the more love I turn toward the outside world the less love is left for myself, and vice versa. He thus describes the phenomenon of love as an impoverishment of one's self-love because all libido is turned to an object outside oneself."

Fromm, however, disagrees with Freud's analysis. He concerned himself solely with love of humans, but as "ecosophers" we find the notions of "care, respect, responsibility, knowledge" applicable to living beings in the wide sense.

Love of others and love of ourselves are not alternatives. On the contrary, an attitude of love towards themselves will be found in all those who are capable of loving others. Love, in principle, is indivisible as far as the connection between objects and one's own self is concerned. Genuine love is an expression of productiveness and implies care, respect, responsibility, and knowledge. It is not an effect in the sense of being affected by somebody, but an active striving for the growth and happiness of the loved person, rooted in one's own capacity to love."

From the viewpoint of eco-philosophy, the point is this: "We need environmental ethics, but when people feel they unselfishly give up, even sacrifice, their interest in order to show love for nature, this is probably in the long run a treacherous basis for ecology.

Through broader identification, they may come to see their own interest served by environmental protection, through genuine self-love, love of a widened and deepened self. *You are part of the earth, and the earth is part of you.*

When we love the earth we are loving ourselves. It is good to love ourselves. But we have to come to see this unity of ourselves and the earth.

Segment three appears in the April 2 Islander.