

Swifter, higher, stronger

By Father Robert Sherry
NC News Service

When I played baseball in the Pony League while growing up in Aurora, Ill., I once hit a grand slam home run. The ball sailed over the electrical wires strung between the tops of the high lamp poles. Many people said it was the longest ball they'd ever seen hit. I was about 13.

Of course, today's record is tomorrow's starting point, as I would have abundant opportunities to realize later.

During the games of the 23rd Olympiad in Los Angeles this summer, record after record was broken as the athletes proved themselves swifter, higher, stronger.

It makes you wonder: Is there any limit to human potential? How is human potential discovered and unleashed?

Christians believe that each person is gifted with a personal vocation — a special and unique calling. The talent is usually hidden within a person to be discovered like a treasure.

The rub is that it is hidden. For some people it might have been covered over by years of hearing someone say: "You'll never amount to anything" or "You can't do that."

Others never had a sense of achievement. Perhaps no one offered them any recognition. It could be that a person had no sense of personal responsibility, little chance for advancement or personal growth — important factors that help us unleash our potential.

One college senior was wondering what she would do after commencement. After 16 years of schooling she didn't have much sense of who she was or where she was headed. It happened that she picked up a magazine and spotted two multiple-choice questions that started her thinking.

The first asked: What is the

most effective way to discover human potential — by scientific testing; trial and error; reading books; a special program; or through the assistance of a mentor, coach or guidance counselor?

The second asked about the best way to unlock human potential. Is it by exercise or through prayer and meditation? What about self-discipline?

The young woman realized she never had thought about all this. Yet when she reflected on some others in her graduating class, she realized they had definite plans for what they would do after they received their diplomas. It seemed as though they had found a way to discover and unleash their potential.

In "Seasons of a Man's Life," Daniel Levinson says a person bet-

ween the ages of 18 and 30 has four tasks to perform.

—Dreaming comes first. We create tomorrows by what we dream today.

—Second, it is vital to form a relationship with someone who is helpful as a guide — someone to talk with at times.

—Third is discovering an occupation — choosing from among your dreams.

—Fourth is forming close, supportive relationships.

Perseverance and commitment are among other factors that help to unlock a person's potential. I think.

The Buffalo News once said: "A man can fail many times, but he isn't a failure until he starts to blame somebody else."

And Goethe, the 19th-century

author of "Faust," said:

"Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it."

God gave us great potential, for we are created in his likeness. Moreover, we have the tools to discover and unleash our potential.

That doesn't mean God will stop us from falling. Rather, God always picks us up.

As my friends at the management research group known as Selection Research Inc. say: We must focus on excellence, study our success and move from our strengths.

(Father Sherry is director of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Priestly Formation.)

A bundle of possibilities

the opposite: humanity's enormous importance.

Of no other creature was it said, as it is said of man and woman: "In the divine image he created them" (Genesis 1:27).

A sense of wonder at humanity's value swept over the psalmist. "You have made him little less than the angels, and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him rule over the works of your hands, putting all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yes, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the fishes of the sea and whatever swims the paths of the seas" (Psalm 8:6-9).

Now, to be made in God's image and likeness means that humanity is given a share in God's creative love and power. People are co-creators.

And God is eternally active and creative. A sign of this is found in the ongoing development and growth — the ongoing creation —

of each human person.

No person is a finished, static product, like a car rolling off an assembly line. The only change the car will undergo is deterioration — and depreciation!

A human being, on the other hand, never stops growing physically, intellectually, emotionally, spiritually.

In short, each person is a bundle of possibilities. Those possibilities become actualities when people exercise their free will — when they make choices.

In fact, every single choice a person makes, no matter how apparently unimportant, is creative — or destructive. Like a hammer blow on metal, every choice molds our characters and personalities; it creates us.

We are, with God's help, "captains of our souls." Of course, there are circumstances in life over which people have no con-

By Father John Castelot
NC News Service

Photos of the Earth taken from space reveal a luminous little sphere as cold and lonely as the moon. Viewed from space, our world — which used to seem so enormous and whose problems still seem almost overwhelming — suddenly looks tiny and insignificant.

Many centuries ago a man gazing out into space gave voice to these thoughts: "When I behold your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you set in place, what is man that you should be mindful of him or the son of man that you should care for him?" (Psalm 8:4-5).

But — and this is the surprising point — it was not humanity's insignificance that stunned the ancient writer as he looked into the stars. What struck him was quite

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