



## PROGRAM TRANSCRIPT

### **Program #5317**

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#### WELCOME

**Daniel Pawlus:** Welcome to “30 Good Minutes!” We’re happy you’ve joined us for this half-hour of reflection on faith. I’m Daniel Pawlus.

**Lillian Daniel:** And I’m Lillian Daniel. Our guest today, whom you’ll meet in a moment, is writer and television host, Fr. Edward Beck. He’ll be talking with us about cooperating, not competing, to save the world.

**Daniel Pawlus:** We also welcome back our friend, Vicki Garvey, Director of Spiritual Formation for the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago. She’ll be reflecting on the concept of “conversion.”

**Lillian Daniel:** We begin with the story of Wangari Maathai, a native of Kenya and founder of the Green Belt Movement, which is responsible for the planting of more than a billion trees worldwide. For her extraordinary work, which she says is grounded in the Book of Genesis and the Psalms, she was awarded the 2004 Nobel Prize for Peace. Let’s watch.

#### SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

**Wangari Maathai:** The actual process of planting a tree is almost very spiritual, so you’re almost repeating the acts of God. There is something about touching the soil and going down on your knees. It’s almost like you’re humbling yourself.

It wasn’t me, just me, standing there. I knew that there stood all women of the world and especially the women of Africa. I knew that I had been given this great opportunity, not to now sit and enjoy the prize, but rather I was being given a new responsibility to take the message to the world and to try to make the world understand that time had come at last to put the environment at center stage.

We cannot live in peace with each other if we do not manage our environment responsibly and accountably.

I realized that when the environment becomes degraded and resources become scarce, people will fight over them. People who would normally call each other brothers and sisters suddenly are quite willing to confront each other.

We need to govern ourselves in a way that we promote human rights, we promote the rule of law, we promote democracy, and we promote an inclusiveness so that everybody in the

community will feel that they are part of that community. I want to urge you that as we leave this church today, you look at the trees and the green vegetation with special respect and you thank them. You see a tree, you see a bush, you thank them for taking care of the carbon dioxide you breathe out.

I was recommended as one of three hundred students who came to the United States in 1960. And I ended up in Kansas where I picked up this accent! I ended up in Atchison, Kansas in a small college called Mount St. Scholastica College, managed at that time by the Benedictine Sisters. One of the greatest things that people still ask me is, "Why do you do what you do?" And in a light touch I like to tell them but that's the nun in me. Psalm 23 is for me is a wonderful Psalm: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." And, of course, when the psalmist talks about that the Lord lets me lie on green pastures, I mean, how wonderful that is to lie on green pastures and to drink from waters that never go dry!

### SPEAKER INTRO

**Daniel Pawlus:** Our thanks to Wangari Maathai for her important work and for sharing her story. You can find out more about this extraordinary woman by visiting our web site at [30goodminutes.org](http://30goodminutes.org). Now, let me tell you about today's speaker.

Fr. Edward Beck is a Roman Catholic priest of the Passionist Community in Pelham, New York. A popular writer, he's the author of three books: "God Underneath," "Unlikely Ways Home," and "Soul Provider." Fr. Beck serves as program host of "Focus on Faith" on the ABC Now Network and is executive producer and host of "The Sunday Mass," which airs nationally and can be seen in Chicago every Sunday on CBS Channel 2. Fr. Beck conducts retreats and workshops on spirituality and is a regular commentator on religion and faith for national news outlets like CNN and Fox. We're delighted to welcome Fr. Edward Beck back to "30 Good Minutes." Welcome, Edward.

### MESSAGE

**Edward Beck:** Thank you, Daniel

I'd like to begin by sharing with you two short Scripture passages, one from the Hebrew Scriptures and one from the Christian. The first one is from the Book of Numbers, Chapter 11, verses 25-29:

*The Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to Moses. Taking some of the spirit that was on Moses, the Lord bestowed it on the seventy elders; and as the spirit came to rest on them, they prophesied. Now two men, one named Eldad and the other Medad, were not in the gathering but had been left in the camp. They too had been on the list, but had not gone out to the tent; yet the spirit came to rest on them also, and they prophesied in the camp.*

*So, when a young man quickly told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp," Joshua, son of Nun, who from his youth had been Moses' aide, said, "Moses, my lord, stop them." But Moses answered him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the people of the Lord were prophets! Would that the Lord might bestow his spirit on them all!"*

And now from the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 9: verses 38-40:

*John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in your name, and we told him to stop because he is not one of us."*

*And Jesus replied, "Don't tell him to stop. There is no one who performs a mighty deed in my name who can at the same time speak ill of me. For whoever is not against us is for us."*

Soon after I was ordained a priest I was asked to go on for further studies in spirituality, in Omaha, Nebraska of all places. Being from New York City, and somewhat provincial, Omaha wasn't high on my list of destination points. So, there I was my first summer studying, and bored, when a priest friend of mine offered to visit for the weekend. Now this was better news than the Second Coming as far as I was concerned. He told me that he had a friend from Omaha who lived here who offered to show us around during the weekend. Now I didn't think there was much more for me to see, but I was game.

When we picked up his friend Dennis, who happened to be a Christian Brother, the first place he took us was a high school, which I thought was a bit strange. But we soon found out that this was the high school that Dennis had attended as a student, where he was a champion swimmer. When we walked into the lobby, there in the trophy cabinet were six of Dennis' swimming awards. He happened to point them out.

Next stop was downtown to an art gallery. I enjoyed the first salon of some abstract art, and the next salon was an exhibit by some new artists where Dennis was showing some of his pieces. He went on to explain them to us in full detail.

Next he took us to another high school, and as we pulled up, I thought to myself, sarcastically, "What, did he play baseball someplace else?" But, no, this was the high school where Dennis was now principal. And instead of trophies in the lobby, there were some plaques. Upon closer inspection I saw that they said, "Best Principal in Omaha," 3 years running. And guess whose name was on the plaques? Yes, Dennis. Well, I was beginning not to like this guy Dennis.

Next stop was a place in the suburbs, though I really didn't see much of a difference. We pulled up to this very nice house where an elderly couple greeted us. They proceeded to show us a new addition they'd just constructed onto the house: private bedroom, sitting room, beautiful personal garden. And they had it built, for, guess who? Yes, Dennis. I really was not liking Dennis by this point.

Well, thank God the day was finally over and I was dropped back at Creighton University. I made a beeline for the chapel. I was livid, sitting there trying to pray, but just feeling angry instead. What a wasted day, I get stuck with this guy showing me how great he is, and how he excels at everything. But as I began to quiet down a voice from deep inside of me said, "You're jealous. You think Dennis looks a lot more talented than you. You think Robert probably thinks he makes a much better and more interesting friend than you. You're jealous." And as soon as I was able to hear those words, the tightness in my stomach began to loosen. I opened my fist just

a little. And I had to admit, that even though I still didn't really like the guy, that Dennis was indeed a talented and gifted man. And that he made a difference in people's lives.

It's a strange dynamic that occurs in us at times. Unless the good is happening to us, or we are in some way included in it, we have a strange tendency to sit and stare at it or to resent it. We feel diminished in the presence of somebody else's giftedness and talent. We even try to pull it down. I love today's Scripture readings because this human dynamic is on full display. The readings speak to the human heart that we know so well. In the Book of Numbers, Eldad and Medad weren't in the tent when the Spirit descended, yet they too got the gift of prophecy. But it ticked the others off. They complain to Moses, "Stop them." And Moses' response is: "Are you jealous? Would that all the people would prophesy. Would that the Lord's Spirit would descend on them all." But the instinct is to limit the Spirit of God as something reserved for the few who are in the right place at the right time. We don't like it when God is generous to those whom we deem don't deserve it. You know that Scripture passage from Matthew where Jesus says that God's sun rises on the good and the evil and that he sends rain on the righteous and unrighteous? Well, we don't like that one too much. Where's the justice in that?

And then, of course, in today's reading from the Gospel of Mark we have the ever clueless disciples of Jesus coming home puffed up and sure of themselves saying to a baffled Jesus, "Master, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, but we told him to stop because he wasn't one of us." And Jesus' response is, "What'd you do that for?" And they say, "Well, he wasn't one of us." And Jesus says, "So what, you dopes. Good was being done. Life was flourishing. Don't tell him to stop. If he's not against us, he's for us." Sometimes Jesus can just really tick you off can't he?

I'm not sure why it's our tendency to sit and stare at the good rather than encourage and celebrate it. It seems as though perhaps we're hardwired that way. But it's one of those tendencies I think we have to work against. You would assume that those of us in ministries of service would have gotten past some of this counterproductive behavior. But you'd assume wrongly. Maybe we're just insecure and want the attention focused on us rather than elsewhere. And somehow we have this misguided notion that if someone else rises, we fall. But it's really not true. Because in the spiritual life, the laws that rule the physical world simply don't apply. In the physical world, if I give away one of my three apples, then I have one less. I only have two. But if I give away part of myself in service and kindness, I wind up having more than I started with. In the spiritual life sharing what we have only produces more of what we have. But even we religious professionals don't get that.

Some of you know that one of my ministries is to produce the Sunday TV Mass for the Passionists, my religious community. I know you're aware of it because we recently starting airing the Mass here in Chicago on CBS Channel 2, and many of you write to tell me how much it means to you. With that in mind I recently had plans to begin airing the Mass in another Diocese that shall remain unnamed. But the Bishop of that Diocese pulled the plug on it. You see, he already had a Mass airing that his Diocese produced. And he didn't want the competition. He forbade me from airing the Passionist Mass there. I know that may be hard to believe. "But good was being done. Life was flourishing. If he's not against us, he's with us. Why'd you tell him to stop?" Because that's what we do sometimes. And I get it, but I think we really have to

work against it. Someone else's good fortune or success or good looks, or financial gain, or ability to communicate God's love, has nothing to do with ours. It doesn't diminish us one iota. They can have more and we not have less. In the world of Spirit, would that all of the people would have more. Would that God's Spirit would rest on them all.

### CONVERSATION

**Lillian Daniel:** If you'd like a printed transcript, audio copy or DVD of the message you just heard from Edward Beck, we'll tell you how to place an order at the end of the program. Or you can visit our website at [30goodminutes.org](http://30goodminutes.org) to watch the video or read the text anytime.

But now, let's talk with Edward Beck. I love that story from the Book of Numbers about Eldad and Medad prophesying, and I remember that Moses as a spiritual leader came by that lesson the hard way. Leading up to that story he has reached the end of his rope, he's complaining to God about the burden he has with all the people, and it's God who says, "Go out there and get your seventy elders together. You don't have to do it all by yourself." What is it about religious leaders that they can go astray like that and think that it's all about me, it's all about what I do?"

**Edward Beck:** I guess it's called humanity. You'd think that we'd be exempt but we're not, and we fall into the same pitfalls as everybody else. I was trying to say in that reflection, I just think sometimes we get threatened if we see somebody doing it better than we do it and it's a natural instinct. But as I said, I think you have to work against it because it really has nothing to do with you, it has to do with where the message gets spread, how it gets spread and who does it best.

**Daniel Pawlus:** What it called out for me, Ed, was this idea of God as a force of abundance and for us to operate from that place. Why do we struggle with that? And I wonder if this is something that you work with in some of your retreats, where people just aren't able to embrace the abundance of God, and fight for what they don't have or what they wished they had in another sense.

**Edward Beck:** I think that maybe a basic insecurity in us, and maybe it comes from when we're very young and we don't get the attention, that maybe we think we deserve or we get knocked around a little or people in some way don't say nice things about us. And so when we do get the attention, it's so nourishing for us that we want to bask in it. We want to keep it. And when we feel it slipping away we think, "Oh, there it goes." I just think it's a woundedness, it's an insecurity. And I think it's probably common to all of us. But again, if we can work against it I think what we wind up seeing is that we don't need to be threatened at all.

**Lillian Daniel:** I couldn't help but think about sibling rivalry and wondering is that where it all begins. I mean, did you have siblings growing up? Did you struggle with these issues?

**Edward Beck:** I have one brother. He's two-and-half years younger and we did have a bit of a struggle. He followed me in school. I did well academically and didn't do as well, so he would get some of my teachers who would say, "Well, you're not the student Edward was. You don't do it like Edward did it." But he was a better athlete. So we would play intramural sports and I mean it was kind of embarrassing. My younger brother hit better than I did. He shot better than I

did. And so we would compete that way. So I think what we wound up doing was excelling at what we did best and we kind of rubbed each other's noses in it. So I would get good grades and say, "You want to see the report card?" And he would say, "Yeah, but you really loused up that basketball game." So it went back and forth. It was sibling rivalry but it was also you stake what you're good at, you plant your feet in, and you try to make your name, I suppose, in that. And it has advantages. It's not always bad but it can have some disadvantages as well.

**Lillian Daniel:** But boy, those teachers don't do you any favors when they start comparing kids and saying, oh your brother learned this before you did.

**Edward Beck:** No. But we live in a world of competition, don't we?

**Daniel Pawlus:** I want to ask you about that because you're wonderful in your writing and your messages about talking about people in ministry and the challenges that you face. What about competition within ministry? Many people are drawn to it for the good work that they want to do, but competition can come up in that. How do we address that for people that have the right intention but are working with this competitive nature in themselves?

**Edward Beck:** Well, I must admit when I got that response from that bishop, who again remains unnamed, I was a bit nonplussed by it. I thought, well, if it's a different time this mass is going to air and it's not the same as your mass because it's a different perspective, why wouldn't you embrace it? Why respond from a place of threat? And yet I realize there have been times in my ministry where I give retreats all over the country and someone will say, "There is another retreat to parishes going on and we went to hear him and he's really, really good." And I'll think, "Oh, how many people is he getting?" They'll say, "Well, it's a pretty full church." And I'll start to think, "I wonder what he's saying that I'm not saying. Why is he getting more people?" It's just again, even though we're about good news and the message is important and it's liberating, I think we have to work against those instincts that somehow are going to do us in.

**Lillian Daniel:** This comes up a lot of times in my work as a local pastor that often it's difficult for pastors in the same town to have intimate, real friendships because there is this sort of sense of competition. Even when we don't foster it, often our members are saying, "I know somebody who's really not happy at the Lutheran church and I'm encouraging them to come to our church." I feel like, no, we don't want those people. We want the people who don't have a faith community. But that's just so much present in the world.

**Edward Beck:** And it's not only the ministers, isn't it the congregants as well? They get on the parish council and they're the elite and they're better than the other parishioners then. Or different ministries. Lectors who want to be the best lector. It's funny. We just have this need to be number one. Maybe it's very American. I don't know.

**Daniel Pawlus:** Ed, we want to hear more about your other ministry work and the television work that you're doing. Talk to us a little bit about the ABC program and your work with Chris Cuomo.

**Lillian Daniel:** And we promise not to be jealous!

**Edward Beck:** Chris Cuomo is the co-host of *Good Morning America* on ABC and he's also a friend of mine. And we used to work out in the gym and we would have conversations while we were working out and we would fight about religious issues. We'd really fight about them because we're usually on opposite poles for some reason. So I was doing a show for ABC at the time, hosting another show and he said, "Why don't you forget that show and why don't we do this show. You have boring guests anyway and I'd be much more interesting!" So Chris and I started it, the producers loved it, the concept of it. And it's basically religion news of the week. We kind of just raise some issues and then we debate them. We talk about them. We pick two issues a week and we fight on air. It's not quite Fox News fighting but it is kind of back and forth. Even if he agrees with my perspective he'll take the other perspective just so that we'll have something to talk about. So it's good.

**Lillian Daniel:** Your ministry has unfolded in ways probably that you never had expected. You do so much with media and that sort of thing. Are there ways in which your colleagues in the ministry, other priests, might feel competition with you or struggle with you that your work is so different?

**Edward Beck:** Sometimes I get some of that. I have one priest who calls me the "movie star." And he does it half-kiddingly, but I also know that there can be resentment when you're placed in the literal spotlight. People wonder why you, or why do you get to do this, I suppose, as if it's some glorified position. It certainly, as you know, it's not always glorified. It's a lot of hard work and there's a lot of preparation. And yet, yeah, I think there is the elitism of it that disturbs people and they think, well, why did he get to do that. I do encounter that sometimes.

**Daniel Pawlus:** But it's part of your inspiration and your own spiritual life to express yourself through these different venues, so to speak, right? In your writing, I know, certainly and the opportunity that the television programs give you to talk about issues you're very passionate about that you think should have a faith perspective to them.

**Edward Beck:** Yeah. I think it's a wonderful opportunity. I mean, the media is so used to defining us, religious people or clergy people, and now I get the chance to say this is who we really are and this is what we really believe and stand for. And I get to do it unedited and I really like that because I think religious people and religious institutions are so misrepresented in the media. My opportunity here is to put another face on it and I really appreciate that.

**Lillian Daniel:** Well, that's what we try to do here, as well. So we're delighted that you're here.

**Edward Beck:** You do. You do it really well.

**Lillian Daniel:** Thank you.

### REFLECTION INTRO

**Lillian Daniel:** We turn now to our friend, Vicki Garvey, Director of Spiritual Formation for the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago. She has a final thought for us about "conversion."

## REFLECTION

**Vicki Garvey:** Like a lot of you, I've been driving since I was sixteen. It's an automatic skill. I don't have to think through all the steps: start the car, steer, brake, check mirrors and all that anymore. Driving is second nature. But one Saturday morning, while driving around doing errands and listening to NPR's "Car Talk," I learned that something I've been doing from the first time I got behind the wheel is wrong. I was taught that when I made a turn, I should do it by crossover: one hand on the wheel, the other crossing it to grab the wheel and move it.

But now with air bags that's become a no-no. In an accident: bag deploys, smashes arm which smashes nose and face. Not good. Now the method is feed-the-wheel from one hand to the other leaving arm and face out of harm's way. Great! So I'm relearning how to drive and making some progress. I do catch myself doing the old crossover sometimes. That's understandable because what I'm trying to change is habitual behavior and that's not easy. It takes time and patience and practice and the belief that the change is worth the trouble. So I learn all over again that the unexamined life can be a pitfall in a car and in my life. Auto-pilot is, in fact, not a particularly helpful way either to drive a car or to steer my way through the life of faith.

## CLOSING

**Lillian Daniel:** Thank you, Vicki. And our thanks again to Edward Beck, Wangari Maathai and you for being with us today on "30 Good Minutes." I'm Lillian Daniel.

**Daniel Pawlus:** And I'm Daniel Pawlus. Before we go, I encourage you to visit our website at [30GoodMinutes.org](http://30GoodMinutes.org), where you'll find an extensive collection of reflections and stories, on video and in print, to enrich your spiritual life. Now, from all of us at "30 Good Minutes," may peace be with you in the week ahead.