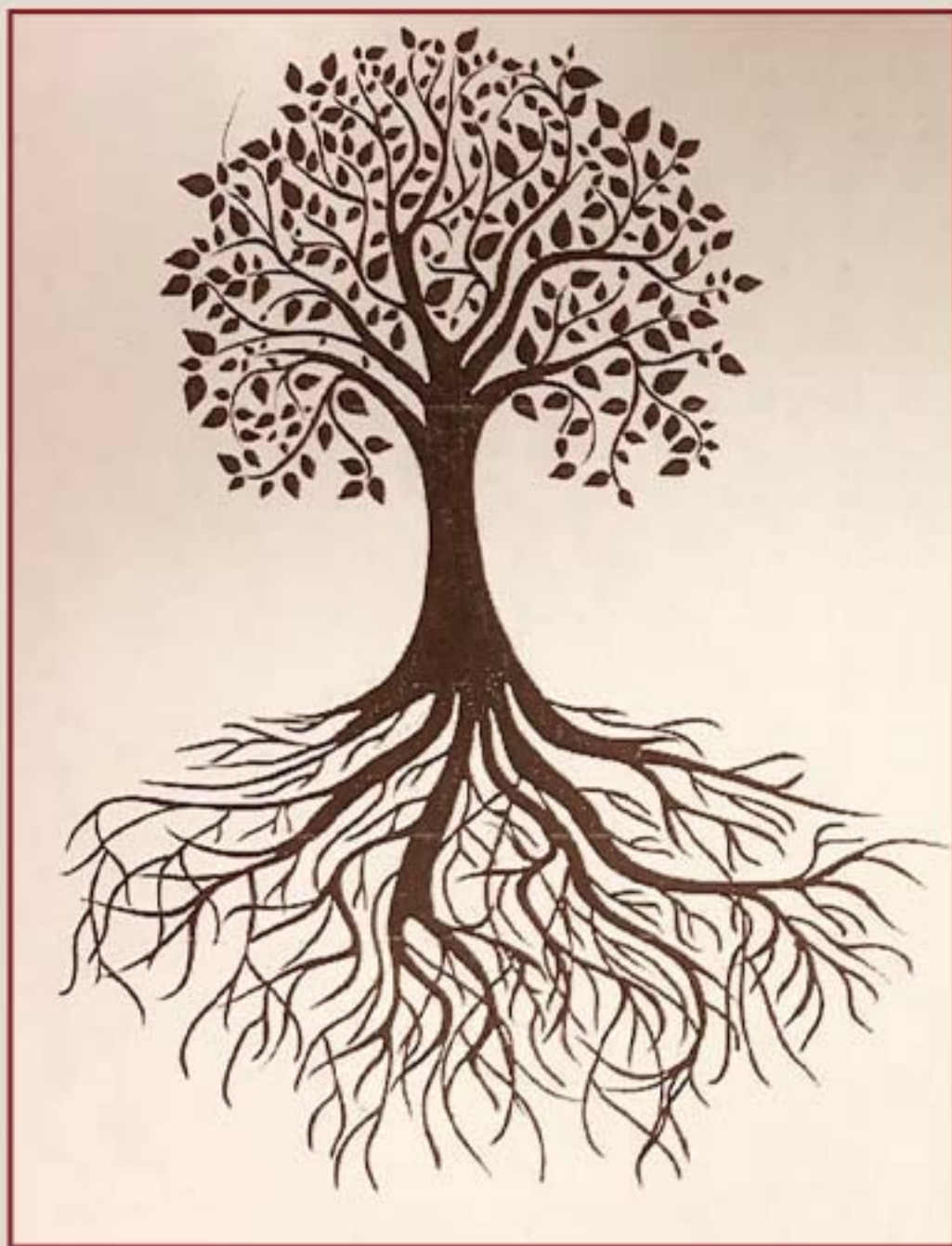


CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONCLUSION



THE FOUR R'S

Chapter 11: Conclusion

Sandra and Paul's Four "Rs"

Dear loved ones,

If you have had the stamina to read this rather lengthy family history, it is now time to reflect on what we have learned from it. We call them the four "Rs".

First of all, this book helps to describe our family "Roots" (the first "R") for a good reason. Even genetic science will support the conclusion that humans are similar to plants that spring up from their roots. In essence, our "Roots" are a defining factor in our lives.

Today, as the current generations of our family, you are enjoying the American Dream not only because of your hard work, but also your Roots. These Roots have two large sources. First, our immigrant ancestors who made enormous

sacrifices to leave their home and family to start a new, and often difficult life in America. Their experiences are described throughout this book. From these ancestors we have also inherited many personal characteristics and talents in what is now called DNA. In a certain way these inherited traits, combined with the major factors in your upbringing, define you as a person.

The second Roots source are the founders of this great American nation who put together a constitutional framework, unmatched anywhere else in the world, to grant freedom to all; a nation founded “under God,” not under humans.

Despite any flaws in these two Roots, we can never be thankful enough that they are our foundation, and we are deeply indebted and grateful for this first “R”.

Next, as we look back over our history, it is clear that, for the most part, our forebearers were truly blessed. Although

there have certainly been hardships along the way, these blessings include our family traditions of mutual support, peace and love, and especially the close engagement with our Religion, the second “R”.

We say “especially our Religion” because as we have aged, we realize more and more how much this “R” has provided to us, fostering the blessings of faith throughout our family history. Among many other values, it has taught us humility and accepting our own imperfections and those of others. In essence, our Religion has helped to endow us with the feeling of fulfillment and joy in our lives. To us, it is no surprise, and today well supported in psychological studies, that religious people are happier and more mentally content than non-religious people.

Sadly, however, Religion is in a decline and the world is becoming more and more secular. As a result, a growing number of our fellow human beings are becoming self-centered, angry and divisive, and hence, more stressed,

mentally troubled, less happy and sadly, more violent.

Without a religious anchor, people are set adrift in the search for values, and wind up being influenced by what we call CHIB (Corruption, Hypocrisy, Idol Worship and Brainwashing), without even realizing it. But even in the secular world, people still have a spirit that needs to be nourished. As the Greeks said centuries ago, we must feed our body, mind and spirit. Today, as a result of this need, many people try to reap the benefits of Religion by turning to secular substitutes, like meditation, yoga or various cults – but they are weak replacements for Religion. To more fully understand the importance of Religion, read Paul’s treatise “Religion in Your Life”.

Our Roots and Religion have also been important sources of guidance for our third “R”, determining the Route we will follow in our lives – our work, careers, other pursuits and, most important, our mission. We believe that God has put us on this earth for some purpose, and it is our job to discover

what that is, and how to pursue it. But God has also given us a free will, so this pursuit is not always easy, since the CHIB in our lives can readily misdirect us.

To determine the proper Route through life, we must seek God’s guidance and spend the time and effort necessary to truly understand our talents, skills, and drive. This will determine the Route that makes our spirit feel nourished and fulfilled. Finding your proper Route is also helped along by the fourth “R”, Relationships.

As we have gone through life, it is quite clear to us that those we associate with, that is, our Relationships, make a huge difference to us – in our accomplishments, growth and feeling of fulfillment. We often say how blessed the two of us were to have found each other at such a young age (high school), and to have gone through our lives together with love never ending. Our blessing certainly also includes our growing family, which is most important.

Clearly, our key relationship, that is with God, has been most rewarding to us.

But there are many other relationships too numerous to list here, that have had an incredibly positive effect on our lives. In general, they certainly include our parents, other family members and friends, as well as numerous nuns, priests, teachers, co-workers and colleagues in our professional lives.

But the highlight in building meaningful Relationships, which we learned from our religious principles, and has been supported by our lifetime experiences, is the importance of giving, not receiving. We have always strived to give, give, give, and do so without seeking, or even expecting anything in return. Here, we're not simply talking about giving to charities, but actions in our everyday lives. Sandra often uses the term "working together." It has been part of her life's philosophy.

The modern term “networking” is a rather narrow version of this fourth “R”. Today, this means interacting with people you meet and exchanging social and professional contacts in the hopes these acquaintances might be able to help you some day. “You scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours.” It might pay off in some instances, but it is rather self-centered. The missing element is the personal fulfillment one experiences with giving, without expecting any reward.

To clearly see the effects of giving, just look at people who are in religious life, or in other charitable roles. They get enormous fulfillment in their lives just by giving and not receiving – it is their life’s work. The prayer of St. Francis (“....For it is in giving, that we receive...”) is one of our favorite prayers, and captures this best. Check out the full prayer in Box 6.4. Another application of this philosophy is captured in our little booklet “Paul and Sandra’s Advice for a Happy and Fulfilling Life.”

In sum, in addition to making us feel happy and fulfilled, giving often begets Relationships, which will influence not just family and friends, but one's education, careers, and many other pursuits. Relationships have been a key to the pursuit of our life's mission and many of them are mentioned in the Chapters of this Book.

We urge all of our children, family, and descendants to carry forward the values of the four “Rs” – Roots, Religion, Route, and Relationships. Through them we are confident that you will find the joy and fulfillment in your life that God intended.

May God bless you all, with love,

Sandra and Paul