

## **Traveling Companion: Talking to Myself**

### **Fr. Michael Tracey**

"How are you feeling?" If I had a dollar for every time I had been asked that question, I would be rich. I am always expected to answer, "Fine," and go on to the next topic of conversation. Often I answer the question with, "I don't know." Then I can see people's mind computing and wondering what I mean. I take them out of the quandary by indicating, "I haven't asked myself yet today." Then the puzzlement continues, on their part, wondering why I am complicating a simple question. I wonder if they think I might be a candidate for a straightjacket and maybe thinking that I talk to myself too much.

The whole idea got me talking to myself some more and I still feel pretty sane. I shape the question this way: Who is the most important person I have a conversation with? Whom do I talk to most every day? People on the phone? People I work with? People I counsel? Family? Friends? I enjoy admitting it but the person I talk to most every day is myself and I am not ashamed of it and I know it is not the first sign of madness.

I am always having a running commentary with myself and it doesn't confine itself to my waking hours. Sometimes I have excellent conversations with myself during my supposedly traditional sleeping hours. In fact, I write many of my articles for Gulf Pine Catholic during such conversations.

I love talking to myself and do it all the time. Let me give some examples. I go to a wedding rehearsal dinner and I don't know anyone there. I hear myself saying all kinds of things to myself like: "is this going to an exciting evening?" "Will I meet someone who is really interesting?" "Will the speeches be long-winded?" "I hope there is someone here I know." "Would I rather be somewhere else? "

Now, I have to admit that my conversations with myself could get a little biased; it could even drive me to depression, anxiety and even self-destruction. I also admit that my conversations with myself do not entail the most useful things. Maybe I need to listen more deeply to see if there is a pattern that thwarts my personal growth. Maybe sometimes I hear myself saying: "I could never do that," or, "I shouldn't think that way" or, "maybe I shouldn't say anything unless I have something worthwhile to say" or, "I know I am going to foul up this time" or "I'm a total failure" or, "she's not going to like me" or, "I should have done something else" or, "I blew it!"