

The original TV show, *Star Trek*, creates a pilot program that completely changes before the program is aired for the first time. The unused pilot becomes a later episode in which *Captain Pike* – the original Captain of the *Enterprise* instead of *Captain Kirk* – is severely injured and confined to a machine that keeps him alive.

The episode unfolds with *Spark* hijacking *Captain Pike* and the *Enterprise* so that they can travel to a planet that is considered off-limits. The writers use a trial scene to introduce the unused pilot, and to explain why *Spark* is returning *Captain Pike* to this forbidden planet.

Apparently (we discover), *Captain Pike*, who had previously crash-landed on this planet, knows that the race who lives here has the ability to *manipulate minds* to experience reality in a way that is either pleasing or painful. *Captain Pike* wants them to *manipulate his thoughts* so that he can *live in the illusion* that he is whole and not dependent upon a machine to stay alive.

Most – if not all – of us also prefer to live in **illusion** rather than in **reality**. The difference is that we make this **choice** (most often) **unconsciously**. Our **parents, culture, society, and religion** pass onto us an **illusory way of life** that the **Scriptures** call **SIN**. (Our **Christian** theology calls the **illusory life** that we receive from **others, society, and religion ORIGINAL SIN**.)

The **illusory life** isn't always **pleasant** and can be quite **painful**, but often we **prefer** the painful way of life because **it feels more real** to us. We are well **practiced** in living as though we are our **thoughts and feelings, likes and dislikes, successes and failures, guilt and shame**. They **feel more real** because they are either **generated or pass through our minds**.

Father Anthony de Mello calls our **addiction** to living an **illusory life**: our **attachment to suffering**. That is, our **attachment** to a way of **thinking** that we can live **independently** from **God** and **each other**. It is

our **attachment** to **thinking** that we are **superior** or **inferior** that leads us to **rape and pollute** the earth to the extent that as of the year 2000, the earth can **no longer renew** itself fast enough to **regenerate**. We are now **depleting** the **natural resources** of the earth.

Our **thinking** also leads us to **mistakenly** believe that we can **love God** and **hate, discriminate, colonialize,** and **belittle** ourselves and other people. Our **minds** lead us to **think** that we can **disassociate** love of **God** **from** love of ourselves and other people. Maybe one of the reasons we can **trick** ourselves is because we **mistakenly think** that **love** is **OUR** creation.

Both our second reading from the **First Letter of John** and the **Gospel of John**, point to another reality. They tell us that **love** is not **our creation**. Rather, **love** is who **God** is **and** **God** creates us with love. When we **attempt** to live in any **illusion** created by **OUR** minds, we **try to live** as though **God** and we are different than we are, and we **suffer**.

Practicing to **observe** ourselves without judgment and **with compassion** frees us to see that often what we call **reality** is really **an illusion**; what we **think** has **substance**, is really **nothing**. One way that we can **practice** is by setting aside 10-15 minutes each day to sit **quietly**. We will **immediately** be **bombarded** with **thoughts, feelings,** a **sense of urgency,** a **need to do something - anything**. As we **practice observing** (**without** trying to get **rid** of these **distractions**, as we call them), we will begin to **notice** that our **minds generate** these **bombardments** to **keep us living in the illusion** that we are **somebody** because we **engage** in (or try to get **rid** of) these **activities and feelings**. Then, it also begins to **dawn** on us that we are **more than the illusions** that are **parading** before us.

Slowly we realize that we are love as God is love, and our suffering is transformed into joy.