

Living the Spirit Spirituality

Many books have been written and many studies have been made on the subject of spirituality. It is not my task in this writing to attempt any integrated study of that noble theme. Yet, no writing that is titled as “Living the Spirit” can be without some reference to the theme of what it means to have a sense of the spiritual in our life. Some years ago I was happy to meet an expert on this very subject, Father George Aschenbrenner. I have read several of his books. It is a small part of his ideas with a few of my own that I set forth here and share with you.

The tasks of the spiritual life, whether personal or institutional, do not in any final way reach their end. This is because these tasks involve life. So we must expect to find in our pursuit of a personal way of living in the Spirit growth, change and experiences. These will continue long after we become set in the way we manage to live out our Christian vocation. This vocation, remember, begins with our Baptism. For most of us that time has been long in the past.

I like to describe our living our calling as a journey. Certainly we can find in Scripture the element of journeying. In a previous writing I noted the journeys of the chosen people in their exodus from Egypt. Indeed all the while they were living their life, a journey from God to God.

We find also the theme of journeying in the New Testament. It begins with an angel Gabriel being sent to a maiden named Mary. He comes as a messenger, seeking an answer. He brings the call of the Father to seek Mary’s Fiat. The Son of God becomes incarnate by the Holy Spirit. Throughout the life of Jesus there is journeying. Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem where Jesus is born. They go up to Jerusalem for the religious rites so essential at that time. They come again to Jerusalem to find Jesus teaching in the Temple.

The same Jesus in time walks throughout the land, bringing wisdom, and the Spirit of God is with Him. A newly refined and excellent spirituality comes into existence. If you wish to know its tasks you must read the Gospels. You need to understand the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. Our spiritual works are to be performed with purity of soul, with meekness, with courage to endure even persecution.

Life is seen by the truly spiritual people as a great adventure. It is a journey with many choices and requires a vigorous response along the way. I think here of how many exciting journeys I was privileged to make. Can you do the same? In them were found beauty, art, rest, joy and sometimes challenging experiences. [I think of how I got on the wrong train and ended up in a rural spot, only having to wait hours for a train to take to back where I started.]

Spirituality requires us to have faith vision on our path. That vision requires that we have a light shine on our path. Need I say that for the devoted Christian that light is Jesus? He

is the Light of the world shining in the darkness. No journey so long can be without its night. In the journey of faith one expects to find some darkness.

If we look to the journey of our Church community today we see much penetrating darkness. It seems to us that only God can give a meaning to life itself. Yet God is the God who has called being out of nothingness and order out of chaos. He has enlightened the path of the Church over time that has reached into millennia. There can be no doubt that He is with us, a Presence that has drawn us to himself by his revelation. We can take joy in our knowing that Jesus has promised to be with us until the end of time, a promise made at the very dawn of the Church coming into being.

There is a widespread darkness today in our very busy, very sophisticated world. We are challenged to find time to live at least a minimum of the spiritual while being engrossed in the material. We are finding our lives restless when they do not rest in the Lord who alone can give the peace the world cannot give. The Church is undergoing persecution that is virulent and barbaric in certain parts of the world. In the West we find challenges too deep to be imagined just a short time ago. There is a new atheism, a new paganism. Moral values are set aside as men and women seek endless “rights.”

I need not go further in my description of this spiritual darkness. But I would not have you forget all the wonderful graces that abound within the Church. For myself I love the Church, and I am not wrong in believing that you do as well. It is a place for us and for all souls seeking salvation. In the Church we find that the Lord is with us.

Are there tasks of spirituality for us in our time? Certainly there are. We must work as apostles of a new personal and universal evangelization of spirit. We must show the beauty of a sacramental life. A life of holy marriage, or of consecration to the work of holiness. Do not feel you are exempted from this work. It must begin with your being holy. That may mean using the sacrament of Reconciliation, where our distance from God on the journey is made into a closeness of His presence with us along the way.

Finally in Catholic spirituality in all its varied forms there must be a devotion to the Holy Eucharist. The Church asks us to find our spirituality in our offering with Christ the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. We are called to a Communion with Him and one another. The Eucharist will provide for us the spiritual energy to fulfill the commands of a loving Father: To love God with all of our being and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

The power of evil, the darkness of the world does not have a chance of being eternal. There is always a Resurrection, a new day. God is with us on the journey. On that journey He gives us light. No wonder we need not keep be afraid!

*God bless and love you always
Monsignor David Morrison*

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