

Living the Spirit – Spirituality

It is an awesome task to clear out all the bits and pieces I have saved over the years. That is what happens when one stays in the same place a long time. So I have decided to make the effort to discard those articles I have saved. Indeed, the task proved easier than I thought. So many of these “treasures” are quite outdated, and so have past their usefulness for inserts like this. Yet, there are a few that I have found worth revisiting. It is not my intention to do more than to take the general themes and share them with you. I hope they will be interesting.

One that I found dated 1976 had a good description of spirituality. What does it mean to be spiritual? People say that in America we are suffering a spiritual crisis. That certainly is true, given the various agendas that divorce morality from our culture. What does it mean to be a spiritual person? There are many aspects to any answer.

We must admit that if we work at it, everyone of us can be a spiritual person. We are created to be so, to have a relationship with God. Yet we take spirituality for granted, thinking it will somehow just happen. Our complicated existence with all its distractions and necessities makes that unlikely.

Spirituality does not mean stripping oneself from all things material. It does not mean giving up our “materiality” or ordinary human existence. It exists not in giving up such things, but in seeing beyond them and seeing them more clearly. It is also true that it cannot be faked. It cannot ultimately be attained by lonely effort. Here we recall how Jesus told us that we can do nothing without Him. It is of this that He speaks.

Here the article says the following. “Spirituality is a kind of luminous transparency that one finds in persons who have forgotten themselves... who can use the things of the world with the simple grace of those who are not used in turn by them. Spirituality is the prize of those who do not seek to impress others, who are not self-conscious and awkward in their need to find a pious thing to say on every occasion....Being at ease with the things of the spirit may be the dominant characteristic of truly holy men and women. There is a simplicity of wholeness.”

That is why I have often said to those who asked me about their state of holiness: You can only be as holy as God wants you to be. Of course, he wants all to be holy, but some are called to reach the pinnacle of grace. If this happens to you, it will be for the sake of others. Saints are not so much for themselves as they are for those whose lives they touch. In the end we must work at being holy, but be satisfied with humble results, if that is all there is.

Finally, do not be surprised to find holiness in unexpected situations and in persons who do not fit the mold of plaster-image saints. Do not always expect to find your path to holiness in loud noises, but seek God in the silence of your heart. Let that heart be ready to live your faith with burning charity, which is love. Love God and yes, love others, and love just as Jesus did. Didn't he say, “*Love one another as I have loved you*”?

Here is another article from Extension magazine [December 1991] written by Father John Powell, a noted spiritual writer. Writing about Christmas as “the season of the heart,” he suggested that we make a list of what we think what love does and does not do. It would make, he says, a good examination of conscience.

What love does:

ACCEPTS you wherever you are, AFFIRMS your goodness and giftedness.
BUILDS up your confidence. CHALLENGES you to be all you can.
CARES about you, wants to know that you are okay.
EMPATHIZES – can see what it is like to be you.
ENCOURAGES you to believe in yourself. IS GENTLE in dealing with you.
KEEPS CONFIDENCES – your secrets are safe.
IS KIND and always on your side, LAUGHS with you but never at you.
LOOKS for the goodness in you and finds it, MAKES YOU GLAD to be you.
OVERLOOKS your foolish vanities and weakness.
PRAYS for your needs and growth.
SEES good in you that others never noticed.
SHARES itself through self-disclosure.
SPEAKS UP for you when you need to be defended.
IS TACTFUL even when confronting you.
TAKES RESPONSIBILITY for its own behavior.
TELLS you the truth, always. THINKS about your needs,
IS TOUGH OR TENDER, depending on your needs
UNDERSTANDS your ups and downs, allows you “bad days.”

What love doesn't do:

ABUSE or take you for granted. ASK you to march to a different drummer.
BLAME you or carry grudges.
BULLY you by anger with loud voice or tears.
CUT you down, exploit your weaknesses.
GET you in a win-lose situation, GIVE you unsolicited advice
JUDGE you or tell you what your trouble is.
JUST TOLERATE you as a condescending favor.
MAKE you prove yourself again and again.
NEED always to be right. POUT or refuse to talk.
PUNISH you for being you. RECALL the times you were wrong.
REMEMBER your failures. REMIND you of all that might go wrong.
SEEK to be the center of attention.
SHOW OFF to put you in your place.
SHIFT the blame to others. TRY to cut you down to size.
UNDERMINE your confidence.
USE you for selfish purposes, then discard you.
VENTILATE emotions on you as a garbage dump.
WRITE YOU OFF for not meeting its demands or expectations.

Feel free to make your own list. Find love in your life.

*God love you always!
Monsignor David Morrison*