

Living the Spirit  
Year of Faith and States of Life

*Before I write about the theme of this insert, I wish to let you know that we have become able to put these writings on our parish internet site. This site's address is found at the top of the third page of our parish bulletin. I wish to thank Msgr. Sacks for his agreement to this personal ministry of mine continuing at our parish. I would like also to thank Ralph Sullivan who had patience with me - (I could be called a computer "dummie") – for his generous gift of expertise and time. Of course, for now we will still need the generous help of our "stuffers." I owe them much gratitude. I am trying to consider how to bring our paper copies to an end, or at least to minimize this way of making "inserts" available. I will welcome your advice and views on this. I am well aware that not everyone who reads these has a computer or is expert in its use.*

**Year of Faith and States of Life**

I have noted before that there seems to be a lack of real enthusiasm for engaging in our work as Catholics during this Year of Faith. It is easy to see this celebration of faith as something that applies only to the institutional church. It is, however, a time for individual effort to bring our beliefs as Catholic Christians into our culture. As individuals we must live in a milieu that is at times indifferent, or even hostile, to the teachings of our faith.

If we are believers, we live with all the graces that our faith gives us. We must be Christlike, for our faith requires us to be so. In confronting the forces of evil, of ignorance of religious values, etc., we must be careful not to bring hatred of persons into our way of life. We see this in our reaction to same sex marriage. We must recognize the wrong involved in the policy, but we must continue to love the persons seeking such unions. Definitely we are simply not homophobes, as the accusation goes.

In our personal work of believing, we do so with an ever-maturing growth in our spiritual life. We do not exist in some vacuum of everyday concerns. We do, however, see our life as tied to God's plan for us – each of us as individuals. Let me write now of the various states of life to which we are invited by God's grace.

**The Married State of Life**

In the ordinary course of societal life, most people are called to seeking and living a union with another – of *not* the same sex – in marriage. Marriage is for the believer a creation of God. The first book of the Bible, Genesis, makes this very clear. The Church's teachings are rich in the development of this way of life.

As a canonist (a church lawyer), I find worth noting the definition the law of the Church gives to marriage. Let me cite this here: "The marriage covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, and which of its very own nature is ordered to the well-being of the spouses and to the procreation and upbringing of children, has, between the baptized, been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament." (Code of Canon Law, canon 1055).

From this definition we can discern that marriage as a way of life is for the baptized a sacrament. This means it is a holy way of life, and holy in its origin. It also is a way in which those who marry are given God's grace to live with the duties and the joys that come with married life. It is also a way of life that one lives in a complete partnership with another. This partnership is not limited to a few such duties or joys, but embraces

the whole of life. I am sure that most of my readers have recognized how together married couples can be in the main concerns of living.

This way of life is not an easy one, but that is because life on earth is not meant to be the final gift of a loving God to His creation. That is why the Church has filled in the details of what married life entails as a spiritual venture. The faithful have the benefit of a real Christian concern that marriage unions not be entered into lightly. Programs for preparation for marriage continue to be developed in the midst of a society that has changed so many of its values. The Church also tries to influence civil authorities to protect and nourish this way of life.

### **The Religious State of Life.**

We know those who enter this way of life as Sisters, Brothers or Religious priests. Religious life is a way of life that involves living in community, with a life subject to the rules of a religious order or congregation. All such approved communities make vows to God of poverty, chastity and obedience. Possessions are made common to all the members. Authority within each community is governed by the laws of the Church. Members do not marry but in a mystical way take Christ as their "partner" in life.

I am grateful that I lived at a time when religious life was flourishing. The good Sisters were excellent teachers. They strengthened the faith I had from home. I am sure that the memories of the Sisters and other religious are treasured memories of much good given to those who travel together on the road of life.

### **The Priesthood and Diaconate**

Because the Church is a Eucharistic Church it necessarily needs those who choose to live their lives as priests. The Church also knows how important are the deacons whose calling is to service in the Church. It is not for me here to write of the origins of the priesthood. Today practical concerns threaten the priesthood of the Church as priests fulfill the call to preach, offer the sacrifice of the Mass and guide the faithful. We must not equate priestly living with a profession or a way of work. It is a vocation that derives ultimately from God.

In this Year of Faith believers are called to strengthen the priesthood in its many aspects. The chief way is to pray - even more intensely - for priests, who are facing many confrontations in our secular culture. The Church is calling on the laity to assume many duties once left solely to the priests and clergy. Being active as Catholics means doing what is needed to live the life of the Church. Not least is the need to give good example to those around us, both within and outside the unity of the Church.

### **The Single Life**

Some are called to live a life without the partnership of a spouse or in a community of life as religious. I can say little here at this time. I do marvel at many living this life and their devotion to works of love and charity among us. May we try to support them in their way of life in every way we can. Truly their way is a "blessed" one.

A dear priest-friend of mine used to end his homilies with the phrase: "Think about it!" I would suggest that it may be time for all of us to do the same as we evaluate how we are living this Year of Faith. Let's think about it!

*God love you always!  
Monsignor Morrison*

*August 25, 2013*