

## Living the Spirit Appointed Times

As I write this there is the report that more snow is on the way. The weather expert says it will be for a short time with not much snow to add to what we see around us. My thoughts turn to an earlier snowfall this season. I looked out the kitchen window and saw the tree in the front yard. I was impressed with its beauty. It was sparkling and glorious, as no artist could ever paint.

They say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. I admit that in former times snow was a definite evil. I recall the days when finding a parking place as the school day began was nearly impossible. I even took to walking from St. Francis to Allentown Central Catholic. Snow days were few and far between. Somehow we all managed. I doubt that we saw snow as beautiful.

Is there anything spiritual about snow, I ask myself. It seems to me that there is, if we think about it. Its whiteness (at least at its start) makes me think of purity of soul. The Scripture speaks of the white robes of the just, made white by the Blood of the Lamb, the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ the Savior. When I see the snow made ugly by the dirt from the street, I think of the sins that mark the beauty of the soul. Yet, even with that disfigurement, there is still something valuable. The soul, created by a loving God has still a chance to recapture its beauty. His forgiveness awaits us!

I do not know if the great spiritual writers ever wrote about the spirituality of snow. I recall two things here. The feast of Our Lady of the Snows is in August. It recalls that Pope Liberius experienced an out-of-season snowfall just where the great church dedicated to Mary would be built. Today one can visit in Rome the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore. [It is worth mentioning that Pope Francis visited it on the day after his election.] The snow can remind us of the purity of Mary which gives hope to all of us.

I also recall how St. Therese of Lisieux, the Little Flower, had a wish in prayer that on the day of her reception snow would fall. It was on that day that it did, out of season, just where she was. Her cloister was a place to learn holiness. Her task at that time was to do just that. [Pope Francis has decided to dedicate this year as a time of prayer for and appreciation of the consecrated life. The Church has such need of it.]

So my days in this winter season have not been completely without some spiritual inspiration. While feeling shut-in by the impossibility of being about, we can all find ourselves alone with God. He is after all everywhere at all times. To be with Him means we have to leave all else aside, as best we poor mortals can. Soon enough we come back to the busyness of everyday life. Work goes on and tasks remain. The work may even intensify because of its delay. But it would help us all if we only remember that even there and then the Lord is with us.

What images of His presence, even of His beauty, will next inspire us? Let us have eyes to see and hearts to love -- for that is what life is about. How marvelously Jesus fulfills his promise of giving the believer abundant life!

### Appointed Times

I now turn to a second theme. I have wondered how I could write about the anniversary of Msgr. Sacks. That will surely be a time for great joy for a parish that has enjoyed the fruits of his ministry for so long. I will not take the time to canonize him, for that would not be pleasing to him. I must allow my personal greetings to be just that.

As I contemplated what to write about priestly anniversaries, I came to the reading on Tuesday in the Office of Readings in the Seventh Week in Ordinary Time. My mind took off to find its inspiration. Let me record some of that Scripture.

*“There is an appointed time for everything and a time for every affair under the sun.”* The text goes on to contrast what seems good with what is not – *birth with death; killing with healing; tearing down with building; weeping with laughing; scattering with gathering; being silent and speaking. “There is a time to love.... and a time of peace”*

I thought to myself how this text can describe so much of the priestly ministry. The anniversary of a priest’s Ordination is indeed a time for recalling how God has worked His Will on those called to this ministry of service to His People. The human author of the text goes on to say: *“I recognized that whatever God does will endure forever; there is no adding to it or taking from it. Thus has God done that He may be revered.”* It is no wonder that our teaching finds our priesthood is without end. One is a priest forever, made so that Christ may be found in the images of the mere men He chooses for that way of life. Jesus wills all this that God may be revered by all of us.

What meditation this text can give the priest himself. How good it is for those to whom the priest ministers to listen in, as it were, on his meditation. How does the word come alive for a priest? *“A time to be born, a time to die.”* The priest must think of how he often presides at birth through Baptism or at the last prayers for those who have finished their journey to God. Every priest must work to *plant*, and in doing so must *uproot* what is planted that is evil. The seed he sows is to be the Word of God, and in this he must *speak*. His task is to preach what the Spirit has revealed. He must also at times *be silent* where human discourse is one of hate or war or sin. In silence he may hear what the Lord is saying to him that must be revealed to His People.

No one who wishes to describe the life of the priest should say that there is only weeping, mourning, or seeking in that way of life. Like all life given to us by God there is also much to live for. There is great joy and happiness of soul. What priest does not come to know that Jesus has given him the hundredfold in this life and the promise (if he is faithful) of eternal joy in the next? Every anniversary is a time for the priest and those he serves to know that all life is meant to be a *“time for love, a time for peace.”*

*God love you and bless you always!  
Monsignor David Morrison*